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THE

TREATISE

ON

RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS,

BY THE LATE

REV. JONATHAN EDWARDS, A. M.

SOMEWHAT ABRIDGED,

By the Removal of the principal Tautologies of the Original; and by an attempt to render the Language throughout more perspicuous and energetic.

=

TO WHICH IS NOW ADDED,

A Copious Index of Subjects.

"It is no disparagement to any one to say that he [President Edwards] is, without a rival, the greatest *Divine* that the present century has produced.——His book on Religious Affections, his Essays on the Conversions in New England, &c. discover his superior skill in experimental Theology.———We take this opportunity of recommending, with all the energy of which we are capable, the Works of President EDWARDS."

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DISTRICT CLERK'S OFFICE.

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the fifthteenth day of L. S. June, A.D. 1821, and in the forty-fifth year of the Independence of the United States of America, JAMES LORING, of the said District, has deposited in this Office the title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as Proprietor, in the words following, to wit:

"The Treatise on Religious Affections, by the late Rev. Jonathan Edwards, A. M.; somewhat abridged, by the removal of the principal Tautologies of the Original; and by an Attempt to render the Language throughout more perspicuous and energetic. To which is now added, A Copious Index of Subjects.

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In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled "An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the Copies of Maps, Charts and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such Copies, during the times therein mentioned:" also to an Act, entitled, "An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled, An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the Copies of Maps, Charts and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such Copies, during the times therein mentioned; and extending the Benefits thereof to the Arts of Designing, Engraving and Etching Historical, and other Prints."

JNO. W. DAVIS, *Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.*

EXTRACT

FROM THE ECLECTIC REVIEW.

In the midst of the present rage for reading, and the increased facilities of publishing new books, we have with pleasure noticed the re-publication of several of the works of our older divines. The demand for such works, shows that there are readers who know their value, and who are able to appreciate those marks of sterling piety and laborious thoughtfulness, by which their works are distinguished. Within the last century, no author, certainly, has appeared, so worthy of being ranked in the same class with them, as Jonathan Edwards. While we follow him through his laborious, and acute, and often cumbrous dissertations, we almost forget that he is a modern. This resemblance must be allowed to extend to some of the more common defects of the old divines, by none of whom, however, he is surpassed as a theologian ; and as a controvertist, he is absolutely without a compeer. His expositions of what may be termed the philosophy of divinity, have carried moral science further than any preceding writer on those abstruse subjects, and have placed the tenets usually denominated Calvinistic, fairly beyond the reach of the petty cavils and feeble declamations of their impugners. Since the publications of Jonathan Edwards's Works, it ill becomes any man who makes the slightest pretensions to philosophy, to treat Calvinism with contempt, or to deny the metaphysical consistency of the system.

The Treatise on Religious Affections was occasioned by the defection of many converts in New England, and by the unsound and disgraceful profession of others. The peculiar circumstances under which the writer was placed, led him to view the subject on all sides, and in all bearings; and in delineating those marks of "gracious affections," which were exclusively the result of a divine influence upon the mind, he has exhibited all his characteristic acuteness.

The small work before us is an abridgment, and an attempted improvement in point of style, of one of President Edwards's most useful and practical treatises. We are not great admirers of abridgments, and have very little taste for improvements upon an author's style; yet we must admit that the "Treatise on Religious Affections" was suspectible of both. To give greater publicity to a work so admirably adapted to extensive usefulness, by compressing it into a cheaper and more readable form, is the design of the present publication; and in the execution of his task, Mr. Ellerby has succeeded beyond our expectations.

THE EDITOR'S PREFACE.

Had the Editor of the following pages designed only to present to the public a mere re-print of any of the works of the late President Edwards, a particular address on his part would have been altogether unnecessary; as the labours of that invaluable and distinguished writer are too highly estimated by at least a considerable division of the religious world, to need any preface, either to apologize for their re-appearance, or to recommend them to still further notice. And doubtless his Treatise on Religious Affections, relating as it does to a subject of the very first importance, is regarded by the generality of his readers, as the most valuable of all his publications. This circumstance, however, will render it the more necessary that some account should be given of the motives by which the Editor has been influenced in forming this abridgment. Why should he have undertaken to make considerable alterations in that which was already esteemed so highly excellent?

Some persons condemn abridgments altogether, and especially any liberties taken with the language of an author. "If," say they, "this system of curtailing the works, and altering the phraseology of writers, were extended to the an-

cient classics, those elegant remains of antiquity would be rendered of little or no value." In reply to this objection, it ought to be remarked, that the real value of most of the Greek and Roman classics, and that of some of our best theological books, depends upon very different circumstances. The former are valuable chiefly for the languages and style in which they are written; and the latter, almost entirely for the important instruction with which they abound. We hold in high estimation the writings of the Puritans, and of some of their immediate successors; but, while we admire the accuracy and extent of their acquaintance with theological subjects, we are wearied with the verbosity of their style, and the extreme prolixity of their method. Perhaps, while there are standard editions of those authors, adapted to the purpose of reference, and to the use of those persons who have sufficient leisure, a greater service can scarcely be done to the cause of religion, than what *might* be done by presenting to the world, through the medium of the press, abridged editions of some of their best and most elaborate pieces.

The style of many of our religious publications, it must be confessed, is not good; and of the last age, the works of the late excellent PRESIDENT EDWARDS afford, it is probable, the most remarkable specimens of bad writing, so far as relates to perspicuity and force. His pious and energetic

mind, wholly devoted to the investigation of divine truth, and zealously intent upon propagating correct views of religious subjects; seems never to have reflected, that the most important sentiments lose much of their effect, when conveyed to us through the medium of an ambiguous and verbose style.

At a rather early period of life, soon after his thoughts were first directed to a serious consideration of religious subjects, the Editor was providentially led to a perusal of some of the works of the late PRESIDENT EDWARDS, particularly his *Essay on the Human Will*, and his *Treatise on Religious Affections;* and whatever satisfaction he has since experienced, and whatever steadiness he has since manifested, as to religious sentiments, he must attribute, in no small degree, to the blessing of God upon this occurrence.

After a lapse of nearly twenty years, Divine Providence, by an unexpected and painful series of events, having removed him to a situation in life, quite different from any in which he had hitherto been placed, and perhaps of all others the most unfavourable to the maintenance of serious piety, he was desirous of renewing his acquaintance with a book so eminently calculated to assist in the important duty of self-examination, as that of EDWARDS ON RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS. This work, therefore, became the constant companion of his numerous journeys; but while he still ad-

mired the book, and he trusts was again benefited by the perusal, he was far less satisfied than he had formerly been, with the style in which it is written. He could not but regret that spiritual instruction so important, should frequently be obscured, and rendered feeble, by a total disregard of the ordinary rules of perspicuity, and by a monstrous profusion of words. He was, therefore, induced, while proceeding through the work, to strike out redundant phrases, and needless repetitions; and to attempt, by verbal alterations, and sometimes, by a change in the arrangement, to exhibit the author's meaning with greater perspicuity and prominency. What he had begun without any view beyond his present amusement, was afterwards proceeded with under a conviction that the *Treatise*, if abridged with a tolerable degree of care, and somewhat amended in reference to style, might be rendered, to the generality of readers, even more acceptable, and more useful than the original. Under this impression, the work was transcribed and carefully revised. That a better abridgment might not have been made, he is by no means presumptuous enough to imagine. He has, however, bestowed a considerable degree of labour upon the work, and he hopes that what he has done, will not very seriously disappoint any reasonable expectation on the part of the reader.

W. ELLERBY.

THE

ORIGINAL PREFACE

ABRIDGED.

THERE is no question of greater importance to every individual of mankind than this;---What is the nature of true religion? or wherein consists the distinguishing virtue, or that holiness, which is acceptable in the sight of God? But though it is of such importance, and though we have sufficient light in the word of God to direct us in the inquiry, yet there is no question upon which professing Christians are more divided. "Strait" indeed "is the gate, and narrow" indeed "is the way, that leads to life, and few there be that find it."

The consideration of these things has long engaged my serious attention. Upon this subject my mind has been peculiarly intent ever since I entered on the study of divinity.—How far I have succeeded in my inquiries, must be left to the judgment of the readers of this Treatise.

Under the present circumstances of religious controversy in this country,* it is difficult to judge impartially of the subject of this discourse. It is probable, that many readers will be displeased, upon finding so much of relig-

* New England.

ious affections condemned; and others, upon finding so much approved. For thus discriminating, I shall, perhaps, be charged with inconsistency, as I have often been since the commencement of our late controversies about religion. Indeed, it was no easy matter to be a cordial and zealous friend of what was really good; and at the same time perceive, and earnestly oppose what was evil and pernicious. It is truly mysterious, that so much that is wrong should be allowed to remain in the church of God. That much false, should mingle itself with true religion, at a time of great revival, is, however, no new thing. This was the case in the reign of Josiah;† during the ministry of John the Baptist;‡ under the preaching of Jesus Christ; in the days of the Apostles; and at the time of the Reformation from Popery.—It appears to have been in the visible church, in times of great revival, as it is with fruit trees in the time of spring: all appears fair and beautiful, promising abundance of fruit; but much of this appearance is of short continuance, and in general only a small part of the fruit arrives at maturity.

It is by mixing counterfeit with true religion, that the devil has always gained the greatest advantage against the cause of Christ, and he has generally succeeded most effectually during seasons of particular revival. By this he injured the cause of Christianity in the apostolic age, and in the period immediately succeeding, much more than by all the persecutions of both Jews and Heathens; by this he prevailed against the Reformation, begun by Luther, Zuinglius, and others, far more than by all the bloody persecutions of the Church of Rome; by this, about a hundred years ago, he prevailed against New-England, quenching the love and marring the joy of her

† Jer. iii. 10 & iv. 3. ‡ John, v. 35.

espousals; and I have had sufficient opportunity of perceiving clearly, that by this he has prevailed against the late great revival of religion amongst us, so happy and promising at its commencement. Here he has most evidently gained his main advantage against us, and by this he has foiled us.

During revivals of religion, those persons who are engaged to defend its cause, are, in general, most exposed where they are least apprehensive of danger. While they are wholly intent upon the opposition which presents itself before them, the grand enemy of the church comes behind, and gives them a fatal stab before they perceive it. As he is not opposed by any guard, he strikes at his leisure, and wounds the deeper.—At such seasons, the friends of Christ do the work of enemies, the people of God are scattered, and religion degenerates into vain jangling. Professing Christians are divided into parties, each taking an opposite course, until the right path is nearly forsaken. The confidence of the people of God is shaken, and their minds perplexed with doubts, while heresy, infidelity and atheism spread themselves abroad.

As it has been, so it probably will be, whenever any particular revival of religion takes place, till we have learned to distinguish between saving experience and affections, and those numerous fair shows, and specious appearances, by which they are counterfeited.

My design in the ensuing Treatise is to contribute my mite, and to use my best endeavours to this end. In a former publication,* I attempted to show the distinguish-

* His "Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of many Hundred Souls in Northampton, and the Neighbouring Towns and Villages of New-Hampshire, in New England," a publication frequently referred to in the ensuing work.

ing marks of the work of the Spirit of God, including both his common, and his saving influences; but what I have now in view, is to describe the nature of the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit, and to point out the peculiar signs by which they are distinguished from every thing besides, of which the mind of man can possibly be the subject. If I have succeeded in any tolerable degree, I hope this work will tend to promote the interest of religion. And whether I have succeeded or not, I hope, through the mercy of a gracious God, to obtain from him the acceptance of my endeavours, and from the real followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, their candour and their prayers.

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A

TREATISE

ON

RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS.

PART I.

ON THE NATURE OF THE AFFECTIONS AND THEIR IMPORTANCE IN RELIGION.

1 *Peter*, i. 8.

Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

THE Christians to whom this epistle was addressed. were suffering from persecution; and in these words the Apostle represents the state of their minds under those painful circumstances. In the two verses immediately preceding, where he speaks of the trial of their faith, and their being in heaviness through manifold temptations, he has respect to these persecutions.

Such trials, though painful in themselves, are beneficial to religion. They are so in three respects:—Its TRUTH is thus manifested; its BEAUTY and AMIABLENESS are thus exhibited; and its PURITY and INCREASE are thus promoted.

In the text, the Apostle observes how true religion operated in the Christians to whom he wrote, and how the nature and tendency of Christianity were manifested under persecution. There were two kinds of operation, or exercise of true religion, of which he takes particular notice.

I. Love to Christ: "Whom having not seen, ye love." Though there was nothing that the world saw,—or that Christians themselves then saw, which thus influenced and supported them; yet they had a supernatural love of something unseen: they loved Jesus Christ, and by this affection they were influenced and supported.

II. Joy in Christ Though their sufferings were grievous, yet their spiritual joys were greater; and these supported them, and enabled them to suffer with cheerfulness. There are two things of which the Apostle takes particular notice respecting this joy.

1. The way in which Christ, though unseen, is the foundation of it, that is, by faith; "In whom, though now ye see him not, yet *believing*, ye rejoice."

2. The nature of this joy; "*Unspeakable* and *full of glory*." Unspeakable in kind; very different from worldly joys, and carnal delights; of a vastly more pure, sublime and heavenly nature; the sublimity and greatness of which, words could not express.—Unspeakable also in degree, it having pleased God, in their state of persecution, to communicate to them this holy joy with a bountiful and liberal hand.

Their joy was full of glory. But though it was unspeakable,—though no words were sufficient to describe it; yet something might be said of it, and no words were more adapted to represent its excellency than these,—*full of glory;* or, as it is in the original,—*glorified joy.* In rejoicing with this joy, their minds were filled with a kind of glorious felicity. It was a prelibation of the joys of heaven, raising their minds to a degree of heavenly blessedness.

Hence the proposition, or doctrine, which I would raise from these words, is this,

TRUE RELIGION CHIEFLY CONSISTS IN HOLY AFFECTIONS.

We see that the Apostle, in observing the operations and exercises of religion in the Christians to whom he wrote, singles out the affections of love and joy. These are the exercises of which he takes notice, as exhibiting the reality and purity of religion.

Here I would

I. Show what is intended by the *affections*.

II. Observe some things which make it evident, that a *great part* of *religion* resides in the *affections*.

1. It may be inquired, what the affections of the mind are.

I answer, the affections are the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination, and will of the soul.

God has endowed the soul with two faculties; one is that by which it is capable of perception and speculation;—and this is called the understanding: the other is that by which it not merely perceives and speculates, but is some way inclined;—or, it is that faculty by which it views things, not as an indifferent, unaffected spectator, but either as liking, or disliking; approving, or disapproving. This faculty is called by different names. It is sometimes called the inclination; and, as it has respect to the actions which are determined and governed by it, it is called the will.

Sometimes the inclination is but just moved beyond a state of perfect indifference; and at other times it is vigorously exercised. Now those lively and powerful exercises of the inclination are the affections.

It should be remarked also that the will and the affections are not two distinct faculties; and that the latter do not differ from the mere actings of the inclination and the will, but only as it respects the liveliness and vigour of the exercises.

It must be admitted that language, in reference to this subject, is somewhat imperfect. In a certain sense, the affections do not differ at all from the inclination and the will: the will is not moved from a state of perfect indifference, but as it is affected. But still there are many acts of the inclination and the will, which are not in general called affections.

The affections and the passions are not unfrequently represented as being the same; and yet, in the more ordinary acceptation of the terms, there is, in some respects, a difference. The word affection appears to convey a more extensive idea than the term passion.

The affections are of two sorts; those by which the soul cleaves to, or seeks; and those by which it dislikes, or opposes. Of the former kind are love, desire, hope, joy, gratitude, complacence; of the latter kind are hatred, fear, anger, grief. There are some affections of a mixed nature; as pity, in which there is something of the former kind towards the person suffering, and something of the latter in reference to what he suffers. In zeal, there is warm approbation, as it respects one object; and vigorous opposition, as it respects another.

2. The second thing proposed, is to notice some circumstances which render it evident, that true religion, in a great measure, resides in the affections.

I. What has been said of the nature of the affections, makes this evident, and is sufficient with-

out adding any thing further upon the subject; for who will deny that true religion consists, in a great measure, in vigorous and lively actings of the inclination and will of the soul, or the fervent exercises of the heart?

That religion which God requires and will accept, does not consist in weak and lifeless inclinations, raised but a little above a state of indifference. God, in his word, insists upon it, that we should be in earnest, "fervent in spirit," *Rom.* xii. 11. having our hearts vigorously engaged in religion: "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him; and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul." *Deut.* x. 12. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." *Chap.* vi. 4, 5. It is such a fervent, vigorous engagedness of the soul in religion, which is the fruit of regeneration, and which has the promise of everlasting life: "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." *Deut* xxx. 6.

If we are not in earnest, and our wills and inclinations strongly exercised, we are nothing as to religion. The things of religion are so great, that there can be no suitableness in the exercises of our hearts, to their nature and importance, unless those exercises are lively and powerful. In nothing is vigour in the actings of our inclinations so requisite, as in religion; and in nothing is lukewarmness so odious. True religion is always a powerful principle; and this power, in the first place, is exercised in the heart, the principal, and

original seat of it. Hence true religion is called the power of godliness, in opposition to the external appearance, or the mere form of it: "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." 2 *Tim.* iii. 5 The Spirit of God, in those who possess real religion, is a spirit of powerful, holy affection; and therefore God is said to have given them a "spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." 2 *Tim* i. 7. And such, when they receive the Spirit of God, in his sanctifying and saving influences, are said to be "baptized with the Holy Ghost, and with fire;" *Matt.* iii. 11. in consequence of the power and fervour of those exercises which the Spirit of God excites in their hearts. Their hearts, when grace is in exercise, may be said to burn within them, like those of the disciples mentioned in *Luke* xxiv. 32.

Religion is frequently compared to those exercises in which the mind and strength are usually very much engaged and exercised; such as running, wrestling, and fighting.

And though there are different degrees of grace, and some Christians are but babes in Christ, in whom the exercise of the inclination and will towards divine and heavenly things, is comparatively weak; yet every one who possesses the power of godliness in his soul, has his inclination and will exercised towards God and divine things, with such strength and vigour, that those holy exercises prevail in him above all carnal and natural affections; for every true disciple of Christ loves him above father or mother, wife or children, brethren or sisters, houses or lands, yea, above his own life. From hence it follows, that wherever true religion exists, there are vigorous exercises of the inclination and will towards divine objects; but agreeably to what was said be-

fore, the vigorous and lively exercises of the will, are in reality the affections of the soul.

II. The Author of human nature, has not only communicated affections to men, but has made them very much the spring of their actions. As the affections necessarily belong to human nature, so holy affections not only necessarily belong to true religion, but constitute a principal part of it. And as true religion is of a practical nature, and God has so constituted the human frame, that the affections are the chief spring of men's actions, this also shows that true religion must consist very much in the affections.

Such is the nature of man, that he is quite inactive any farther than as he is influenced by some affection. The affections are the springs which set us to work in all the affairs of life; and stimulate us in all our pursuits, especially in all affairs pursued with vigour. Take away all love and hatred, all hope and fear, all zeal and affectionate desire, and the world would, in a great measure, be lifeless: there would be no such thing as activity amongst men,—no earnest pursuit of any description. It is affection which engages the covetous, the ambitious, and the voluptuous in their various pursuits. The world continues from age to age in a perpetual commotion and agitation; but take away all affections, and the spring of all this activity would be broken, and the agitation itself would cease. And as in worldly things, worldly affections are very much the spring of action; so in spiritual things, spiritual affections are also very much the spring of action. He who possesses doctrinal knowledge only, is never seriously and earnestly engaged in the business of religion.

III. Nothing is more manifest than that the things of religion take possession of the minds of

men no further than as they affect them. There are many who often hear the word of God, and therein hear of these things which are infinitely important, and which most intimately concern them; but all that is heard seems to be wholly ineffectual, and to make no alteration in their disposition and behaviour:—the reason is, they are not *affected* with what they hear. There are many who often hear of the glorious perfections of God, particularly of his unspeakable love in Christ, of what Christ has done and suffered, and of what relates to another world,—eternal misery, and everlasting felicity. They also hear the immutable injunctions of the law, and the gracious warnings and invitations of the gospel; and yet remain as they were before, without any sensible alteration, either in heart or practice,—because they are not *affected* with what they hear. There never was any considerable change wrought in the mind, or in the deportment of any individual, by any thing of a religious nature, which did not move his affections; never was any one humbled and brought to the throne of grace, by any thing he ever heard, or imagined, respecting his own unworthiness, and his exposure to the wrath of God, nor induced to flee for refuge to Christ, while his heart remained unaffected; there never was a saint recovered from a declining state in religion, without having his heart affected; and, in short, there never was any thing considerable brought to pass in the heart or life of any man, by the things of religion, until the mind was deeply affected by those things.

IV. The holy scriptures every where place religion very much in the affections: such as fear, hope, love, hatred, desire, joy, sorrow, gratitude, compassion, and zeal.

The scriptures place much of religion in godly *fear ;*—so much that it is often spoken of as the character of those who are truly religious,—that they tremble at the word of God,—that they fear before him,—that their flesh trembles for fear of him ;—that they are afraid of his judgments.—that his excellency makes them afraid,—that his dread falls upon them, &c. In scripture, the saints are called fearers of God, and are often distinguished by the terms,—*they that fear the Lord.* And as the fear of God is a great part of religion, true godliness in general, is very often called by the name of the fear of God : every one knows this who knows any thing of the Bible.

Hope in God, and in the promises of his word, is also often spoken of, in the scriptures, as a very considerable part of true religion. It is mentioned as one of the three great things of which religion consists, 1 *Cor.* xiii. 13. It is often mentioned as one of the characteristics of the saints: "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God," *Psa.* cxlvi. 5.—"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is," *Jer.* xvii. 7. "Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord," *Psa.* xxxi. 24. In scripture, religious fear is sometimes united with hope in descriptions of the saints : "Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy," *Psa.* xxxiii. 18.—"The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy," *Psa.* cxlvii. 11. Hope is so great a part of religion, that the Apostle says, "we are saved by hope," *Rom.* viii. 24. It is spoken of as the helmet of the Christian soldier : "And for an helmet, the hope of salvation," 1 *Thess.* v. 8. and the sure and stedfast anchor of

the soul, which preserves it from being cast away by the storms of this evil world: "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and sted fast, and which entereth into that within the veil," *Heb.* vi. 19. It is mentioned as an important benefit received from the resurrection of Christ: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," who, "according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." 1 *Pet.* i. 3.

The scriptures place religion very much in the affection of *love;* in love to God, to the Lord Jesus Christ, to the people of God, and to mankind in general. The texts in which this is manifest, both in the Old and New Testament, are innumerable.—But more of this afterwards.

The contrary affection of *hatred* also, as having sin for its object, is spoken of in scripture, as no inconsiderable part of religion. It is mentioned as that by which true religion may be known, and distinguished: "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil," *Prov.* viii. 13. And accordingly the saints are called upon to give evidence of their sincerity by this affection: "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." *Psa.* xcvii. 10. The Psalmist often mentions this affection as an evidence of *his* sincerity: "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart: I will set no wicked thing before my eyes; I hate the work of them that turn aside," *Psa.* cl. 2, 3. "I hate every false way," *Psa.* cxix. 104 and 128.—Again; "Do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate thee?" *Psa.* cxxxix. 21.

Holy *desire* after God and holiness, is likewise often mentioned in scripture, as an important part of true religion: "The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee." *Isa.*

xxvi. 8. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple." *Psa.* xxvii. 4. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" *Psa.* xlii. 1, 2. "My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." *Psa.* lxiii. 1, 2. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." *Psa.* lxxxiv. 1, 2. "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times." *Psa.* cxix. 20. See also, *Psa.* lxxiii. 25, and cxliii. 6, 7, and cxxx. 6. *Cant.* iii. 1, 2. Such a holy desire, or thirst of soul, is mentioned in the beginning of the sermon of Christ on the mount, as one of those things which render, or denote a man truly blessed · "Blessed are they" who "do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." *Matt.* v. 6. To this holy thirst is promised the participation of the blessings of eternal life; "I will give unto him that is athirst, of the fountain of the water of life freely." *Rev.* xxi. 6.

The scriptures speak of holy *joy*, as constituting a great part of true religion. So it is represented in the text. And as an important part of religion, it is often made the subject of earnest exhortation. "Delight thyself in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." *Psa.* xxxvii. 4.—"Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous." *Psa.* xcvii. 12. "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous." *Psa.*

xxxiii. 1 "Rejoice and be exceeding glad." *Matt.* v. 12. "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." *Phil.* iii. 1. "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice." *Phil.* iv. 4. "Rejoice evermore." 1 *Thess.* v. 16. "Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." *Psa.* cxlix. 2.

This holy *joy* is mentioned among the principal fruits of the Spirit of grace: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy," &c. *Gal.* v. 22 The Psalmist mentions this holy joy, as an evidence of his sincerity: "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches." *Psa.* cxxx. 14.

Religious *sorrow*, *mourning*, and *brokenness of heart*, are also frequently spoken of as forming a great part of religion. They are mentioned as distinguishing qualities of the true saints, and as constituting a principal part of their character: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." *Matt.* v. 4. "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." *Psa.* xxxiv. 18. "The Lord hath anointed me to bind up the broken-hearted,—to comfort all that mourn." *Isa.* lxi. 1, 2. This godly sorrow, or brokenness of heart, is often spoken of, not only as forming a distinguishing feature in the character of the saints, but as that in them which is peculiarly acceptable and pleasing to God: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." *Psa.* li. 17. "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place,—with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." *Isa.* lvii. 15. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit." *Isa.* lxvi. 2.

Another affection often mentioned, as that, in the exercise of which, much of true religion consists, is *gratitude;* especially as exercised in thankfulness and praise to God This being so frequently spoken of in the book of Psalms, and in other parts of scripture, I need not quote, or refer to particular texts.

Again, the holy scriptures frequently speak of *compassion* or *mercy.* as a great and essential part of true religion; insomuch, that, in the sacred writings, good men are denominated from thence. A merciful and a good man are synonymous terms: "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away from the evil to come." And the scriptures select this quality, as that by which, in a peculiar manner, a righteous man is distinguished: "The righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth." *Psa.* xxxvii. 21. And ver. 26 "He is ever merciful and lendeth." "He that honoureth his Maker, hath mercy on the poor." *Prov.* xiv. 31. "Put" ye "on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies," &c. *Col.* iii. 12. This is one of those distinguishing marks, by which our Saviour describes those who are truly blessed: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." *Matt.* v. 7. And this is also spoken of as one of the weightier matters of the law: "Wo unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law,—judgment,—mercy,—and faith." *Matt.* xxiii. 23. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" *Mic.* vi. 8. "For I desired mercy. and not sacrifice" *Hosea*, vi. 6. This seems, from his repeatedly citing it, to have

been a text much delighted in by our Saviour. See *Matt.* ix. 13, and xii. 7.

Zeal is also spoken of, as a very essential part of true religion. The production of zeal in his followers, is mentioned as what Christ had in view, in giving himself for our redemption: "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." *Tit.* ii. 14. And this is mentioned as something of great importance, wanted in the lukewarm Laodiceans, *Rev.* iii. 15, 16, 19.

I have noticed but a few texts out of many, which might be found in different parts of the scriptures, which represent religion as having its seat chiefly in the affections. But what has been noticed will be sufficient to shew, that those persons who deny that much of true religion resides in the affections, and maintain the contrary opinion, must reject what we have been accustomed to esteem as the Bible, and adopt some other rule, in judging of the nature of true religion.

V. The scriptures represent religion, as being summarily comprehended in *love*, the chief of the affections, and the fountain of all the rest.

So our blessed Saviour represents the subject, in answer to the lawyer, who asked him which was the great commandment of the law: "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." The last sentence signifies as much, as that these two commandments comprehend all the duty prescribed, and the religion taught in the law and the prophets. The Apostle Paul repeatedly makes

the same representation: "He that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law." *Rom.* xiii. 8. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." ver. 10. "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." *Gal.* v. 14. "Now the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, &c. 1 *Tim.* i. 5. The same Apostle speaks of love as the most important thing in religion, as the vitals and soul of it; without which the greatest knowledge and gifts, the most brilliant profession, and every thing else belonging to religion, are worthless. He represents it as the fountain from whence proceeds all that is good. See 1 *Cor.* xiii. The word there rendered *charity* in our translation, is ἀγαπη, the proper English of which is, *love.*

The love thus spoken of, includes the whole of a sincerely benevolent disposition of soul towards God and man; and which, when in sensible and vigorous exercise, becomes affection: it is indeed nothing but affectionate love. And surely it is such a vigorous and fervent love which Christ mentions, when he speaks of loving God with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our minds, and our neighbour as ourselves, as the sum of all that was taught and prescribed in the law and the prophets.

Indeed it cannot be supposed, that when this affection is represented as the sum of all religion, the act exclusive of the habit is meant; or that the exercise of the understanding, which is implied in all reasonable service, is excluded. But it is undoubtedly true, that the essence of all true religion is holy love; and that in this holy affection, in that light which is the foundation of it, and in those things which are the fruits of it, consists the whole of religion.

From hence it clearly appears, that a great part

of true religion resides in the affections; for love is not only one of the affections, but the chief and fountain of all the other. From love arises hatred of those things which are contrary to what we love, or which oppose and thwart us in those things in which we delight. From the various exercises of love and hatred, according to the circumstances of the objects of these affections, as present or absent, certain or uncertain, probable or improbable, arise all those other affections of desire, hope, fear, joy, grief, gratitude, anger, &c. From a vigorous, affectionate, and fervent love to God, necessarily arise other religious affections; a dread of the displeasure of God, gratitude to him for his goodness, complacency and joy in him when he is sensibly present, grief and anxiety when he appears to be absent, &c. And in like manner, from a fervent love to men, arise all other virtuous affections towards them.

VI. The religion of the most eminent saints of whom we read, in the scriptures, consisted much in holy affections.

I shall take particular notice of three eminent saints, who, in the writings which they have left us, have expressed their sentiments on this subject, and so described their own religion, and the manner of their intercourse with God.

The first of whom I shall take notice, is David; who has given us a lively portrait of *his* religion in the book of Psalms. Those divine songs are the expressions of devout and holy affections; such as humble, fervent love to God, admiration of his glorious perfections and wonderful works, earnest desire of soul after him, unfeigned gratitude to him for his great goodness, a holy exultation and triumph of soul in his favour, sufficiency and faithfulness. They express also his love to the saints, the

excellent of the earth; his delight in the word and ordinances of God; his grief for his own, and for the sins of others; and his fervent zeal in opposing the enemies of God, and the enemies of his church. And these expressions of holy affection, of which the Psalms of David are every where full; are the more to our present purpose as they are not only the expressions of the religion of so eminent a saint; but were, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, penned for the use of the church of God in its public worship, purposely to express the religion of the saints in all ages of the world. It is likewise to be observed, that David, in the book of Psalms, speaks not as a private person, but as the Psalmist of Israel, as the subordinate head of the church of God, and leader in her worship and praises. In many of the Psalms, he speaks in the name of Christ; and in many others, in the name of the church.

The second eminent saint of whom I shall take notice, is the Apostle Paul, who was in many respects, the chief of the ministers of the New Testament; above all others, a chosen vessel unto Christ, to bear his name before the Gentiles; made the chief instrument of establishing the Christian church in the world, and of distinctly revealing the glorious mysteries of the gospel for the instruction of his people in all future ages. By what is said of him in the scriptures, he appears to have been full of affection; and it is manifest, that the religion he expresses in his epistles, consists very much in holy affections; it appears that he was actuated by a most ardent love to his glorious Lord, esteeming all things as loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. He represents himself as overpowered by this holy affection; and as it were compelled by it to go forward in his service, through

all difficulties and sufferings. See 2 *Cor.* v 14, 15. His epistles are full of expressions of ardent affection towards the people of God. He speaks of his *dear* love to them, 2 *Cor.* xxii 19. *Phil.* iv. 1. 2 *Tim.* i. 2;—of his *abundant* love, 2 *Cor.* ii 4; and of his affectionate and *tender* love, such as a nurse possesses towards her children, 1 *Thes.* ii. 7, 8. He speaks of his bowels of love, *Phil.* i. 8. *Phil.* v, 12, 20, of his *earnest* care for others, 2 *Cor.* viii. 16, of his *bowels* of pity or *mercy* towards them, *Phil.* ii. 1. and of his concern for them even to *anguish* of heart, 2 *Cor.* ii. 4. He speaks of the *great conflict* of his soul for them, *Col.* ii. 1. of *great* and *continual grief* in his heart from compassion to the Jews, *Rom.* ix 2. and of his mouth being opened, and his *heart enlarged* towards the Christians, 2 *Cor.* vi. 11. He often speaks of his *affectionate* and *longing* desires, 1 *Thess* ii. 8. *Rom.* i. 11. *Phil.* i. 8, and iv. 1. 2 *Tim.* i. 4. He very often, in his epistles, expresses the affection of joy, 2 *Cor.* i. 12, and vii. 7, 9, 16. *Phil.* i. 4, ii. 1, 2, and iii 3. *Col.* i. 2, 4. 1 *Thess.* iii 9. He speaks of his rejoicing with *great* joy. *Phil* iv. 10, and i. 7, of his joying and rejoicing, *Phil.* ii. 1, 7, of his rejoicing *exceedingly*, 2 *Cor.* vii. 13. of his being *filled* with comfort, and being *exceedingly* joyful, 2 *Cor.* vii. 4. He speaks of himself as *always* triumphing, or rejoicing, 2 *Cor.* ii. 14, and of his *glorying* in tribulation, 2 *Thess.* i. 4. and Rom. v. 3. He also expresses the affection of hope: in *Phil.* i. 20, he speaks of his *earnest* expectation and of his *hope*. He likewise expresses the affection of godly jealousy, 2 *Cor.* xi. 2, 3. And it appears from his whole history, after his conversion, that the affection of zeal, as having the cause of his Master, and the interest and prosperity of the church for its object; was mighty in him, contin-

ually urging him to those great and arduous labours, in which he was engaged, in instructing, exhorting, warning, and reproving others; contending with those powerful and numerous enemies, which continually opposed him; wrestling with principalities and powers, not fighting as one who beats the air; running the race set before him, continually pressing forward through a variety of difficulties and sufferings. And how full of affection he was, appears further from his being so full of tears: in 2 *Cor.* ii. 4, and *Acts*, xx. 19, he speaks of his *many* tears; and in ver. 31, of his tears which he shed *night* and *day*.

Now if any person can consider these accounts of this great Apostle, and yet not perceive that his religion consisted very much in affection, he must shut out the light which shines full in his face.

The other eminent saint whom I shall mention, is the Apostle John, the beloved disciple, who was the dearest to his Master, and by him admitted to the greatest privileges of any of the twelve. He was not only one of the three who were allowed to be present with him on the mount at his transfiguration, at the raising of the daughter of Jairus, and whom he took with him when he was in his agony; but was favoured above them all, being permitted to lean on his Master's bosom, at his last supper, and being chosen by him as the person to whom he would reveal his wonderful dispensations towards his church to the end of time. He was selected to shut the canon of the scriptures, being preserved much longer than any of the other Apostles.

It is evident, from his writings, that he was a person remarkably full of affection. His addresses to those to whom he wrote, are inexpressibly tender and pathetic, breathing nothing but the most fer-

vent love. The proofs of this cannot be given without disadvantage, unless we should transcribe the whole of his writings.

VII. He whom God sent into the world, to be the light of the world, and the perfect example of true religion and virtue, even the Lord Jesus Christ, was remarkably affectionate. He presented the most striking instance of the ardency, vigour and strength of love, both to God and to man, that ever existed. It was this principle which obtained the victory, in that mighty struggle and conflict of his affections, when he "prayed more earnestly, and offered up strong crying and tears." *Heb.* v. 7.— Such was the power of his holy love, that it was stronger than death, and in the mighty conflict, overcame those powerful exercises of fear and grief, when he was sorely amazed, and his soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. He also appears to have been full of affection, during the whole of his life. We read of his great zeal, fulfilling what is written in the lxix. Psalm: "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." *John*, ii 17. We read of his grief for the sins of men: "He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." *Mark* iii. 5. See also *Luke*, xix. 41. We often read of the affection of pity, or compassion in Christ, *Matt.* xv. 32 Luke, vii. 13, and of his being moved by compassion, *Matt.* ix 36, xiv. 14. *Mark*, vi. 34. And how tenderly affectionate was he, when Mary and Martha, mourning for their brother, came to him with their complaints and their tears! He was affected by their grief, and wept with them; though he knew that their sorrow would soon be turned into joy. See *John*, xi. And how ineffably affectionate was the last discourse, which Jesus had with his eleven disciples, the evening before he was crucl-

fied; when he informed them that he was going away, and foretold the great difficulties and sufferings they would meet with in the world, after he was gone; when he comforted and counselled them, as his dear children, and bequeathed to them his Holy Spirit. See the xiii. xiv. xv. xvi. and xvii. chapters of *John*. Of all the discourses ever penned, or uttered, this was the most tender and affectionate.

VII. The religion of heaven consists very much in holy affection.

In order to learn the true nature of any thing, we should go where the subject of our inquiry is to be found in its greatest purity and perfection. If we would acquaint ourselves with the nature of gold, we must view it not in the ore, but when refined. If we would ascertain the nature of true religion, we must go where true religion is possessed without any defect or mixture.

There is, doubtless, true religion in heaven, and true religion in its utmost purity and perfection. But according to the scripture representation, the religion of a future state consists chiefly in holy love and joy, and the expression of these in the most fervent and exalted praises. So that the religion of the saints in heaven, consists in the same things, as the religion of the saints on earth,—joy unspeakable and full of glory.

The love and joy of the saints on earth, constitute the dawning of the light, life, and blessedness, of heaven; they are the same in nature, though not in degree and circumstances. This is evident from many passages of scripture. See *Prov.* iv. 18. *John*, iv. 14, vi. 40, 47, 50, 51, 54, 58. 1 *John*, iii. 15. 1 *Cor.* xiii. 8—12. Hence, therefore, the religion of heaven, composed chief-

ly of holy love and joy, consists very much in affection; and therefore, undoubtedly, true religion consists very much in affection.

IX. It appears from the nature and design of the ordinances and duties, which God hath appointed, as means and expressions of true religion, that true religion resides very much in the affections.

For instance: the duty of prayer. It is evident that we do not in this duty, declare our wants and desires, in order to inform God, or to incline his heart to show mercy; but suitably to affect our own hearts, and so to prepare ourselves for the reception of the blessings we ask. Such external behaviour in the worship of God, as custom has made significant of humility and reverence, can be of no further use, than as they have some tendency to affect our own hearts, or the hearts of others.

And the duty of singing praises, seems to be appointed wholly to excite and express religious affections. No reason can be assigned, why we should express ourselves to God in verse, rather than in prose, and do it with music; but only, that such is our nature and frame, that these things have a tendency to move the affections.

The same may be said also of the nature and design of those sacraments, which God has appointed. Our heavenly Father, considering our frame, has not only appointed that we should be told of the great things of the gospel, and by his word, be instructed in reference to the redemption of Christ; but also that they should be exhibited to our view, in sensible representations, in the sacraments, in order the more deeply to affect us.

One of the main ends for which God has ordained, that his word, delivered in the holy scriptures, should be explained and applied in preach-

ing; was evidently, that divine things might be thus impressed upon the affections of men. It is, therefore, not sufficient for us to have good commentaries and expositions on the scriptures, and other valuable books of divinity; because, although these may tend, as well as preaching, to give us a doctrinal and speculative knowledge of the things of religion, yet they have not an equal tendency to impress them on our affections. God has appointed a particular, and lively application of his word, in the preaching of it, as fit means to affect sinners with the importance of the things of religion; and to stir up the minds of the saints, by often bringing these things to their remembrance. Preaching is particularly intended to promote the two affections mentioned in the text,—love and joy: "And he" (Christ) "gave some apostles,—and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the edifying of the body of Christ —in love," *Eph.* iv. 11, 12, 16. The Apostle, instructing Timothy, concerning the work of the ministry, informs him, that the great end of that word which a minister is to preach, is "love or charity," 1 *Tim.* i. 3, 4, 5. Another affection for the promotion of which God has appointed preaching, is joy; and therefore ministers are called helpers of our joy, 2 *Cor.* i. 24.

X. It is evident that true religion, or holiness, resides very much in the affections, because the scriptures place sin very much in hardness of heart. It was hardnes of heart, which excited grief and displeasure in Christ towards the Jews: "He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." *Mark*, iii. 5. The reason given why the house of Israel would not obey God, was, that they were hard-hearted. *Ezek.* iii 7. The wickedness of

that perverse, rebellious generation in the wilderness, is ascribed to the same cause. *Psa.* xcv. 7—10. This is spoken of as what prevented Zedekiah's turning to the Lord; "He hardened his heart." 2 *Chron.* xxxvi. 13. The rejecting of Christ, and the opposing of Christianity are ascribed to this principle, *Acts*, xix. 9. When men are left to the power of their depravity and sin, they are mentioned as having their hearts hardened, *Rom.* ix. 18. The Apostle speaks of an evil heart, that departs from the living God, and a hard heart, as the same thing, *Heb.* iii. 8, 12, 13. And that great work of God, conversion, which consists in delivering a person from the power of sin, is often mentioned as the taking away of the heart of stone; and as the giving of a heart of flesh. See *Ezek.* xi. 19. and xxxvi. 26.

Now, by a hard heart, is undoubtedly meant, a perverse, unaffected heart; a heart not easily moved by virtuous affections, but like a stone, insensible, and difficult to be impressed. Hence, the hard heart is called a stoney heart, and is opposed to a heart of flesh. We read, in scripture, of a hard heart, and a tender heart; and doubtless we are to understand these as contrary to each other. But what is a tender heart, but a heart easily affected with what ought to affect it? God commends Josiah, because his heart was tender; and it is evident from what are mentioned as expressions and proofs of this state of mind, that by his heart being tender, is meant its being easily moved by religious and pious affection: "Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord,—hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me, I also have heard thee, saith the Lord." 2 *Kings*, xxii 19.

It is very evident that in some texts, by hard-

ness of heart, is meant a heart void of affection. Of the ostrich it is said, "She hardeneth her heart against her young ones, as though they were not hers." *Job*, xxxix. 16. So a person, unaffected in time of danger, is said to harden his heart. *Prov.* xxviii. 14.

Now, since it is evident, that by a hard heart in scripture, is meant a heart destitute of pious affections; and since also the scriptures so frequently denominate our sin and depravity by the terms "hardness of heart;" it is evident that grace and holiness must, in a great measure, consist in our being easily susceptible of such impressions. Divines are generally agreed, that sin radically and fundamentally consists in what is negative or privative,—in a privation, or want of holiness. And therefore, undoubtedly, if sin very much consists in hardness of heart, and so in the want of pious affections, holiness must consist very much in those pious affections.

I am far from supposing that *all* affections show a tenderness of heart: hatred, anger, &c. may prevail in the hardest heart. Yet it is evident, that hardness of heart, and tenderness of heart, relate to the affections, and denote a mind susceptible, or insusceptible, of certain emotions.

Upon the whole, I think it abundantly evident, that true religion consists very much in the affections. I do not, however, think that religion in the hearts of the truly godly, is ever in exact proportion to the degree of affection, and present emotion of the mind; for undoubtedly there is much affection in real saints, which is not spiritual. Their religious affections are often mixed; *all* is not from grace, but *much* from nature; and though the affections have not their seat in the body, yet the constitution of the body may very

much contribute to the present emotion of the mind. The degree of religion is rather to be judged of, by the fixedness and strength of the habit, than by the degree of the present exercise; and the strength of that habit is not always in proportion to the outward effects and manifestations, or to the hurry, vehemence, and sudden changes of the course of the thoughts. But yet it is evident, that religion consists so much in the affections, that without holy affection there is no religion. No light in the understanding is good, which does not produce holy affection in the heart; no habit of mind is good, which has no such exercise; and no external fruit is good, which does not proceed from this principle.

Having thus considered the evidence of the proposition laid down, I proceed to some inferences.

1. We may hence learn, how much those persons err, who wish to discard all religious affections.

There seems to be too much of a disposition of this kind, prevailing at this time. Because many in the late extraordinary season, who appeared to have great religious affections, did not manifest a right temper of mind, and in the heat of their zeal, run into many errors; and because the high affections of some appear to have entirely subsided, and others who were evidently filled with joy and zeal for a while, seem to have returned like a dog to his vomit; hence religious affections in general are grown out of credit with many persons, as though true religion did not at all consist in them. Thus we easily run from one extreme to another. A little while ago, we were disposed to regard all high affections about religion, as eminent exercises of true grace, without inquiring into the nature and source of those affections, and the manner in which they arose. If persons did but appear to be very

much moved and raised, so as to be full of religious talk, and express themselves with great warmth and earnestness; it was too much the custom, without further examination, to conclude that such persons were full of the Spirit of God, and enjoyed eminent experience of his gracious influence. But of late, instead of admiring all religious affections, we have been much more disposed to reject and discard all without distinction. Herein appears the subtlety of Satan. While he saw that religious affections were much thought of, and that people in general were ill informed upon this subject, he knew that he could best accomplish his ends by sowing tares amongst the wheat, and mingling false affections with the work of the Spirit of God. He saw that this was a likely way to ruin many souls, and to entangle the saints in a perplexing wilderness, and in a short time, to bring all religion into disrepute. But now, when the consequences of these false affections appear, and it has become very apparent, that some of those emotions, which made a fine show, and were by many persons greatly admired, were, in reality, nothing; the devil sees it to be his advantage to go another way to work, and to endeavour, to the utmost of his power, to propagate and establish a persuasion, that all affections and emotions of the mind, with respect to religion, are to be disregarded, or rather opposed, as having a pernicious tendency. This he knows is the likeliest way to reduce all religion to a mere lifeless formality, and effectually to banish the power of godliness, and every thing that is truly gracious. For although, in true religion, there is something more than affection; yet it consists so much in the affections, that there can be no true religion without them. He who has no religious affection, is in a state of spiritual

death, wholly destitute of the powerful, quickening, saving influences of the Spirit of God upon his heart. As there is no true religion where there is nothing else but affection, so there is no true religion where there is no religious affection. As on the one hand there must be light in the understanding, as well as warmth in the affections, for where there is heat without light, there can be nothing divine or heavenly; so, on the other hand, where there is a kind of light in the understanding, without warmth in the affections, a head stored with notions and speculations, with a cold, unaffected heart, there can be nothing divine: that knowledge is not true spiritual knowledge of divine things. If the things of religion are rightly understood, they *will* affect the heart. The reason why men are not affected by such infinitely great, important and glorious things, as they often hear and read of, in the word of God, is undoubtedly because they are spiritually blind; if they were not so, it would be impossible, and utterly inconsistent with the principles of human nature, that their hearts would be otherwise, than very powerfully impressed.

Slighting all religious affections, is the way to harden the hearts of men, to encourage them in their perverseness, to keep them in a state of spiritual death; and to bring them at last to death eternal.

2. If it is true that religion resides very much in the affections; we may infer, that such scriptural means are to be desired, as have a tendency to move the affections. Such a manner of preaching and administering the ordinances, such a mode of worshipping God in prayer, and singing praises, is much to be desired, as possesses a tendency

deeply to affect the hearts of those persons who attend upon the means of grace.

There may, indeed, be such means adopted, as have a powerful tendency to stir up the passions of weak and ignorant persons, which in reality are not adapted to benefit their souls; for though they may have a tendency to excite affections, they have little or none to excite gracious ones, or any affections tending to grace. But undoubtedly, if divine things are treated, in the public exercises of religion, according to their nature, and exhibited in such a manner as tends to convey just apprehensions, and a right judgment of them; the more they have a tendency to move the affections, the better.

3. If true religion resides very much in the affections, we may learn what abundant cause we have to be ashamed and confounded before God, that we are no more affected by the great and momentous concerns of religion. It appears from what has been said, that this arises from our having so little of true religion.

God has given to mankind affections for the same purpose that he has given all the faculties and principles of the human soul, that they might be subservient to the great business for which man was created,—the business of religion; and yet how common is it among mankind, to have their affections much more exercised and engaged in other matters, than in religion! As to those things which concern their worldly interest, the desires of men are eager, and their love warm and affectionate. In reference to these objects they are much impressed, and very deeply concerned. They are much affected with grief at worldly losses, and much elated with joy at worldly prosperity. But how insensible and unmoved

are most men, about the great things of another world! How languid are their affections, as to these things! How insensibly they can sit and hear of the infinite love of God, in giving his dear Son to be offered up a sacrifice for the sins of men; and of the unparalleled love of the innocent and holy Lamb of God, manifested in his dying agonies, his bloody sweat, his bitter cries and bleeding heart. They can hear that all this was done for his enemies, to redeem them from deserved, eternal burnings, and to bring them to unspeakable and everlasting joys; and yet be cold, insensible, and regardless! Where are the exercises of our affections proper, if not here? what is there that more requires them? and what can be a fitter occasion of their vigorous and lively exertions? Can any thing of greater importance be presented to our view? any thing more wonderful? or any thing more intimately connected with our interest? Can we suppose that the infinitely wise Creator, implanted such principles in the human nature as the affections, to be of some use to us, and to be exercised on certain objects, but to be totally inactive in reference to those things which are of the very first importance?

If we ought ever to exercise our affections at all, and if the Creator has not unwisely constituted the nature of man, in making these principles a part of it, they ought to be exercised about those objects which are most worthy of them. But is there any thing which Christians can find, so worthy of their admiration and love, their desires and hopes, their zeal and their joy, as those things which are exhibited in the gospel of Jesus Christ? The glory of the blessed JEHOVAH is there presented to view in the most affecting light, displaying all its lustre, in the face of an incar-

nate, and infinitely compassionate Redeemer. All the virtues of the Lamb of God, his humility, his patience, his meekness, his submission, his obedience, his love and his compassion, are presented to our contemplation, in a manner the most adapted to move our affections. There also the hateful nature of sin, together with the inflexible justice of God, which will by no means allow iniquity to go unpunished, are exhibited in the clearest, and most affecting light; so that God has disposed all things in the glorious dispensation of the gospel, so as most powerfully to impress the affections. What abundant cause have we therefore to be humbled in the dust, that we are no more affected with the infinitely momentous concerns of religion!

PART SECOND.

ON THOSE THINGS WHICH AFFORD NO DECISIVE EVIDENCE, EITHER THAT OUR AFFECTIONS ARE TRULY GRACIOUS, OR THAT THEY ARE NOT.

IF any one, on the reading of what has been already said, is disposed to acquit himself, by saying, "I am not one of those who have no religious affections; I am often powerfully moved by the consideration of the important things of religion:" let him not satisfy himself from this circumstance, that his affections are truly gracious; for, as it was observed before, we ought not to reject and condemn all emotions of the mind arising from a view of divine things, as though true religion did not at all consist in affection; so, on the other hand, we ought not to approve of all, as though every one who was affected by the things of religion, had true grace, and was the subject of the saving influences of the Spirit of God.—We should endeavour to discriminate between true and false religious affections.—In order that I may assist in that important work,

1. I will mention some things which are no proofs, either that affections are such as true religion consists in, or that they are not; and then, in a succeeding part,

2. I will notice some things wherein spiritual and gracious affections, differ from those which are not so, and by which they may be distinguished.

First, I would take notice of some things, which are no proofs that affections are gracious, or that they are not

1. That affections concerning religious things are raised very high, is no proof either that those affections are gracious; or that they are not.

Some persons are disposed to condemn all high religious affections. If professors appear to have their affections raised, with respect to religion, to an extraordinary height, such persons are prejudiced against them, and, without further inquiry, conclude that they are deluded But if true religion resides very much in the affections, then it follows, that where there is much true religion, there will be much religious affection: if true religion, in the hearts of men, is raised to a great height, holy affections will also be raised to a great height.

Love is an affection; but will any Christian say, that we ought not to love God, and Jesus Christ, in a high degree? Will any one venture to affirm, that we ought not to hate sin with a perfect hatred? that we ought not to exercise a high degree of gratitude to God for the mercies we receive at his hands? or that we ought not to possess very strong desires after holiness? Is there any who will profess that his affections in religion are elevated enough; and will say, "I have no cause to be humbled, that I am no more affected by the things of religion than I am; I have no reason to be ashamed, that I have no greater exercises of love to God, and sorrow for sin, and gratitude for the mercies which I have received?" Will any individual bless God that he is affected enough by what he has read and heard of the wonderful love

of God to rebels, in giving his Son to die for them, and of the dying love of Christ; and will pray that he may not be affected by these things in a higher degree, because high religious affections are improper, enthusiastic, and ruinous to true religion?

Our text very evidently refers to high affections, when it speaks of "rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Here the strongest expressions are made use of, which language can possibly furnish.—The scriptures very often enjoin high affections. Thus in the first commandment of the law, there is an accumulation of expressions, as though there were not words adequate to express the degree in which we ought to love God: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind," *Luke*, x. 27.—The saints are called upon to exercise a high degree of joy; "Rejoice," says JesusChrist, to his disciples, "and be exceeding glad," *Matt.* v. 12. "Let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God; yea, let them exceedingly rejoice," *Psa.* lxviii. 3. In the book of Psalms, the saints are often called upon to shout for joy; and, in *Luke*, vi. 23, to leap for joy. They are often exhorted to exercise a high degree of gratitude; to praise God with all their hearts.

We find the most eminent saints mentioned in scripture, often professing high affections. Thus the Psalmist speaks of his love, as if it were unspeakable; "O how I love thy law!" *Psa.* cxix. 97. He also expresses a high degree of hatred of sin; "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with a perfect hatred." *Psa.* cxxxix. 21, 22. He also professes a high degree of sorrow for sin, as a burden too heavy for

him. He likewise expresses a great degree of spiritual desire in many of the strongest terms which can be conceived of. He speaks of his longing, of his thirsting as a land where there is no water, of his soul breaking for the longing it hath, &c. He also mentions the exercise of great and extreme grief for the sins of others: "Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law," *Psa.* cxix. 136. "Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law," ver. 53. He expresses a high degree of joy: "The king shall joy in thy strength, and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice." *Psa.* xxi. 1. "My lips shall greatly rejoice, when I sing unto thee," *Psa.* lxxi. 23. "Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live; I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice," *Psa.* lxiii. 3—7.

The Apostle Paul expresses very high affections. He mentions the exercises of pity and concern for the good of others, even to anguish of heart;—a fervent love,—an ardent desire,—an exalted joy. He speaks of the exultation and triumphs of his soul, his earnest expectation, his abundant tears, and the travail of his soul, his godly jealousy, and his fervent zeal. John the Baptist expresses great joy, *John* iii. 39. Those blessed women who anointed the body of Jesus, are represented as exercising a very high degree of religious affection at the resurrection of Christ;

"And they departed—from the sepulchre, with fear and great joy," *Matt* xxviii. 8.

It is often foretold that the church of God, at some future period of the world, should exceedingly rejoice: "They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance; in thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted," *Psa.* lxxxix. 15, 16. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee," &c. *Zech.* ix. 9. As high degrees of joy are the genuine fruits of the gospel of Christ, the angel calls this gospel good tidings of great joy, that should be to all people.

The saints and angels in heaven, who possess religion in its highest perfection, are exceedingly affected with what they behold and contemplate of the perfections of God, and of his work. They are all as a pure flame of fire in the warmth of their love, the elevation of their joy, and the ardency of their gratitude. Their praises are represented as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder. Now the only reason why their affections are so much higher than those of the saints on earth, is, because they see the things by which they are affected more according to their real nature and importance. Hence it is that their affections are more conformed to the nature of those things. If, therefore, religious affections, in the present state, are of the same nature with those of the saints in heaven, the nearer they are to theirs in degree, the better.

From these things it evidently appears, that if affections concerning religious things, are raised to a very great height, it is no certain proof that they are not such as have in them the nature of

true religion Those persons therefore greatly err. who condemn others as enthusiasts, merely because their affections are very high.

On the other hand, their being great, is no certain proof that affections are of a spiritual and gracious nature. It is manifest from the scriptures, that there are very high affections respecting the things of religion, which are not spiritual and saving. The Apostle Paul speaks of affections in the Galatians, which had been exceedingly elevated, but which he feared were in vain, and had totally subsided: "Where is the blessedness ye spake of; for I bear you record, that if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me," *Gal.* iv. 15. And in the 11th verse he tells them that he was afraid of them, lest he had bestowed upon them labour in vain. The children of Israel were greatly affected by the mercy of God, when they saw how wonderfully he had delivered them at the Red Sea, when they sang his praises, though they afterwards soon forgat his works. So again, they were greatly affected at Mount Sinai, when they saw the marvellous manifestations which God made of himself there; and when he proposed his holy covenant to them, they with great forwardness replied, "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient." But how soon were they turned aside after other gods! So great numbers who were affected by the raising of Lazarus from the dead, had their passions excited to a very high degree, and, when Christ immediately after, entered into Jerusalem, they exceedingly magnified him. As though the ground was not good enough for even the ass which he rode to walk upon, they cut down branches of palm trees, and strewed them in the way, and cried with loud voices, "Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is he

that cometh in the name of the Lord, hosanna in the highest." There was a vast multitude crying Hosanna, so that it gave occasion to the Pharisees to say, "Behold, the world is gone after him," *John* xii. 19. But Christ, at that time, had but few true disciples; and all this was at an end when he stood bound, having a mock robe on, and a crown of thorns; when he was derided, spit upon, scourged, condemned, and executed. Indeed, there was a loud outcry respecting him among the multitude then, as well as before; but of a very different kind: it was not "Hosanna, hosanna," but "Crucify him, crucify him."

It is the general opinion of orthodox divines, that there may be very high affections, concerning divine things, which have nothing in them of the nature of true religion.

II. That they produce strong effects upon the body, is no proof either that these affections are truly gracious, or that they are not.

All affections have in some respects, or degree, an effect on the body. Agreeably to what was observed before, such is our nature, and such are the laws of union between the soul and the body, that the mind can have no lively or vigorous exercise, without producing some effect upon the body. And if all emotions of the mind have some effect on the body, we may conclude that the greater those emotions are, the greater will be their effects on the animal frame. Hence it is no wonder, that very strong emotions of the mind should have great effects on the body. And since there are great affections, both common and spiritual, it is not to be wondered at, that such great effects should arise from both these kinds of affection. And consequently, these effects are no

proof that the affections from which they arise, are of one kind or the other.

Great effects on the body certainly are no sure evidence that affections are spiritual, for such are very often known to arise from great affections about temporal things, and when religion is no way concerned. And if great affections about secular things, have these effects, I know not by what rule we should determine, that high affections about religious things, which arise in like manner from nature, cannot have the same effects.

Nor, on the other hand, do I know of any rule by which we may determine, that gracious and holy affections, when raised as high as any natural affections, and possessing equally strong and vigorous exercises, cannot produce a great effect on the body. I know not why a view of the glory of God, should not cause the body to faint, as well as a view of the glory of Solomon. There is certainly great power in spiritual affections. We read of the power which worketh in Christians, of the Spirit of God being in them as the spirit of power, of the effectual working of his power in them, and of the working of the mighty power of God in them. *Eph.* iii. 7. 2 *Tim.* i. 7. *Eph.* iii. 20. *Eph.* i. 19. But the nature of man is represented in scripture as exceedingly weak; and particularly with regard to great spiritual exercises, *Matt.* xxvi. 41. 1 *Cor.* xv. 43 & 50. The passage prefixed to this treatise, speaks of "joy unspeakable and full of glory." And who that considers the nature of man, and the nature of the affections, can reasonably doubt, but that such indescribable and glorious joys, may be too great for the human frame, so as considerably to overpower it? It is evident from scripture, that clear discoveries of the divine glory, have a tendency, by affecting the

mind, to overpower the body; and that if these views were attended with the same degree of clearness, as they are in heaven, the body could not subsist under them. No man can see God and live. The knowledge which the saints have of the divine glory in this world, and those holy affections which arise from it, are of the same nature with those of the saints in heaven, differing only in degree and circumstances: what God gives them here, is a foretaste of heavenly happiness, and an earnest of their future inheritance; and who shall limit God, or say he shall give so much of the inheritance,—such a part of the future reward, as an earnest of the whole, and no more? And since God has assured us in his word, that the whole reward is such, as would at once destroy the body; is it not presumptuous in us to set bounds to his sovereignty, and to say, that in giving the earnest of this reward, he shall never give so much of it, as in the least to overpower the body, when he has no where thus bound himself?

The Psalmist, speaking of his own vehement, religious affections, mentions the effect in reference to his body, as well as his soul, expressly distinguishing the one from the other; "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." *Psa.* lxxxiv. 2. See also *Psa.* lxiii. 1.

The Prophet Habakkuk speaks of his body being overborne, by a sense of the majesty of God; "When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice; rottenness entered into my bones; and I trembled in myself." *Hab.* iii. 16.

That such views of the glory of God, as are sometimes given in this world, have a tendency to overpower the body, is evident, because the scriptures inform us that this has sometimes actually

been the case. The prophet Daniel, giving an account of a representation of the glory of Christ, says, "And there remained no strength in me; for my comeliness was turned into corruption, and I retained no strength;" *Dan.* x. 8. And the Apostle John, speaking of a a similar representation made to him, says, "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." *Rev.* i. 17. It is in vain to say that these were only external manifestations or symbols of the glory of Christ; for though it is true, that they were outward representations, yet the design was to give to these prophets an idea of the thing represented, and that was the true divine glory and majesty of Christ. In agreement with the end for which God designed these outward signs, they received by them a lively apprehension of the real glory and majesty of his nature, and thus were greatly affected. And I think those persons are very presumptuous, who venture to say that God cannot, or does not, give the same clear and affecting views of the real glory and majesty of his nature, to any of his saints, without the intervention of such shadowy representations.

I would farther observe, that the scriptures often refer to bodily exercises in order to express the strength of holy and spiritual affections; such as trembling, groaning, crying out, panting, and fainting. *Psa.* cxix. 120. *Ezra* ix. 4 *Isa.* lxvi. 2, 5. *Hab.* iii. 16. *Rom.* viii 26. *Psa.* lxxxiv. 2. xxxviii. 10. xlii. 1. cxix. 131. cxix. 81. Now if it be said, that these are only figurative expressions, all, I hope, will allow, that they are suitable figures to represent the high degree of those affections, which the Holy Spirit intended they should represent; but I do not see how they would be so, if those spiritual affections have no tendency to

produce trembling, &c but, on the contrary, are the proper effects, and sad tokens of false affections, and the delusion of the devil. I cannot think that God would generally make use of things which are quite opposite to spiritual affections, and evident marks of the hand of Satan, to represent a high degree of holy and heavenly affection.

III. That they render us fluent, fervent and abundant, in talking of religion, is no proof either that our affections about religious things are truly gracious; or that they are not.

There are many persons, who, if they observe any thing of this kind in others, are greatly prejudiced against them Their being so full of talk, is deemed a sufficient reason for condemning them, as Pharisees, and ostentatious hypocrites. On the other hand, there are many, who, if they observe these effects in any one, are disposed, very imprudently, to conclude at once that he is a true child of God, and under the saving influences of the Holy Spirit: and especially are they confident that such persons are savingly wrought upon, if they are not only fluent, but also affectionate and earnest in their conversation.

But this, as events abundantly show, arises from want of judgment; it is a mistake into which persons often run, by trusting to their own wisdom, instead of making the scriptures their rule. Though the sacred writings are full of directions, by which we are to judge both of our own state, and the state of others; yet we have no where any rules by which we may conclude that we or others are in a good state, from any such effects as these; for this is but the religion of the mouth, and of the tongue, and is in scripture represented by the leaves of a tree, which, though it ought not to be without them, are no proofs of its goodness.

That persons are disposed to talk much about religion, may arise from a good cause, or from a bad one. It may arise from a great degree of holy affections, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; or it may arise from strong religious affections which are not holy, for still out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh. It is the nature of the affections, whatever are their objects, if they are powerfully engaged, to incline us to talk very much of that by which they are excited; and not only to say much, but to talk very earnestly and fervently. And therefore our talking abundantly and very fervently about religion, can only be an evidence that we are very much affected by something relating to religion; but this may be the case, as I have observed before, where there is no grace. That by which men are greatly affected, they will be earnestly engaged about; and they will be likely to show that earnestness in their conversation and behaviour, as the greater part of the Jews in Judah and Galilee did for a while, about the preaching and baptism of John: they were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. The multitude, in like manner, often manifested great earnestness about Christ, and his preaching and miracles; being astonished at his doctrines, receiving his word with joy, following him sometimes night and day, exclaiming, "Never man spake like this man!" But what was the end of these things with respect to the greater part of them.

A person may be disposed to talk much of his own experience, introducing the subject every where, and in all companies; and when this is the case, it is rather a bad sign than a good one. A tree too full of leaves, seldom bears much fruit;

and a cloud, though to appearance very pregnant with water, if it is accompanied by much wind, seldom affords any great quantity of rain. The Holy Spirit has been pleased, several times, to make use of this latter circumstance, in order to represent a great show of religion in profession, without corresponding fruits in the life: "Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift, *is like* clouds and wind without rain." *Prov.* xxv. 14. See also *Jude* 4 & 12, and 2 *Pet.* ii. 17.

False affections about religion, if they are equally strong, are much more disposed to manifest themselves, than true ones; because it is the nature of false religion to affect show, and to court observation: thus it was with the Pharisees.

IV. That they are not excited by our own endeavours, or exertions, is no proof either that our religious affections are truly gracious; or that they are not.

There are many persons who condemn all religious affections which are excited in a way of which the subjects of them can give no account, and which do not seem to be the effect of their own endeavours, or the result of the faculties and principles of human nature; but to arise from the influence of some extrinsic and supernatural power upon their minds.

It is supposed that the Spirit of God co-operates in a silent and imperceptible way, with our own endeavours in the use of means; so that we cannot distinguish between the influences of the Spirit of God, and the natural operations of the faculties of our own minds.

It is true, that for any one to expect to receive the saving influences of the Spirit of God, while a diligent attention to the appointed means of grace is neglected, is unreasonable, presumptu-

ous, and enthusiastical It is also undoubtedly true, that the Spirit of God is far from being uniform in the manner and circumstances of his operations, and that sometimes he works in a way more secret and gradual, and from smaller beginnings, than at other times.

But if there is indeed a power superior to all means and instruments, and above the utmost efforts of nature; and, if according to the general profession of the country, that power is requisite in order to the production of saving grace in the heart; then certainly, it is not at all unreasonable to suppose, that its effects should very frequently be produced in such a way, as to make it manifest that the work *is* supernatural. If the implantation of grace is indeed effected by the efficacious operations of an extrinsic and divine agent, why is it unreasonable to suppose, that it should appear to be so, to those who are the subjects of it? Is it at all strange that it should appear to be as it really is? For this, in fact, is the objection: it is regarded as a clear proof that the affections which many persons experience, are not from a particular cause, because they appear to *be from that* cause. Those who possess them, declare that what they feel is evidently not from themselves, but from the mighty power of the Spirit of God; and others from thence conclude, that what they experience is not from the Spirit of God, but from themselves, or from the devil.

If it is indeed true, as the scriptures abundantly teach, that grace in the soul, is so the effect of the power of God, that it is with propriety compared to those effects which are farthest from being the result of any principle or exertion of human nature; such as being begotten,—or raised from the dead,—created, &c. then how shall we

account for the circumstance, that the Almighty, in so great a work, should so carefully hide his power, that the subjects of it should not be able to discern it? The fact is, if we may form any conclusion from scripture, that God, in the great work of his mercy, which he performs for his people, orders things so, as to make his power conspicuous, and our dependence on him most evident; that no flesh should glory in his presence, 1 *Cor.* i. 27–29; that he alone should be exalted, *Isa.* ii. 11—17; that the excellency of the power should be of him and not of man, 2 *Cor.* iv. 7. that the power of Christ should be manifested in our weakness, 2 *Cor.* xii. 9; and that none should say, Mine own hand hath saved me, *Judges*, vii. 2. So it was in most of those temporal salvations of old, which were types of the salvation of the people of God from their spiritual enemies. For instance: the liberation of Israel from Egyptian bondage; their deliverance by Gideon; and the destruction of Goliath by David with a sling and a stone. It was so in the calling of the Gentiles, and the conversion of the Heathen; after all the endeavours of philosophers to reform the world had proved in vain, and it was become abundantly evident that mankind were utterly helpless, independent of the mighty power of God. And it was so in most of the conversions of particular persons, of which we have an account in the history of the New Testament: they were not wrought upon in that secret, gradual and insensible manner, which is now insisted upon; but with those manifest tokens of a supernatural power, wonderfully and suddenly causing a great change, which in these days are regarded as undoubted signs of delusion and enthusiasm.

The Apostle says, "The eyes of your under-

standing being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power," &c. *Eph.* i. 18, 19. Now when the Apostle speaks of the Ephesians being the subjects of divine influence, in their effectual calling, to the end that they might know what his mighty power was to them who believe,—he can mean nothing else, but that they might know it by experience. But if the saints know this power by experience, they must feel it, as being distinguishable from the natural operations of their own minds.—So that it is very unreasonable, and unscriptural to conclude that affections are not from the gracious operations of the Spirit of God, because they are evidently and sensibly not from the persons themselves who are the subjects of them.

On the other hand, that they are not produced by ourselves, or that they arise in our minds in a manner for which we cannot account, is no proof that such affections *are* gracious.

There are some who make this an argument in their own favour. Speaking of their experience, "We are sure," say they, "that we did not produce it ourselves; it was the effect of no contrivance or endeavour of ours." And hence they very ignorantly conclude, that what they have experienced, must be from the mighty influence of the Spirit of God, and is of a saving nature. Indeed, what they have experienced, may not be from themselves directly; but it does not follow from thence, that it was from the Spirit of God. There are other invisible agents who have influence upon the minds of men, besides the Holy Spirit. We are directed not to believe every

spirit, but to try the spirits whether they are of God. There are evil spirits, exceedingly busy with men, who often transform themselves into angels of light; and, with great subtlety and power, mimic the operations of the Spirit of God.—Many of the operations of Satan are very distinguishable from the voluntary exercises of our own minds. They are so, in those horrid and blasphemous suggestions by which some persons are dreadfully harassed; and in those unnecessary and unprofitable terrors by which others are exercised. And the influence of Satan may be as evident in false comforts and joys, as in terrors and horrid suggestions. It is not in the power of men to put themselves into such raptures, as the Anabaptists in Germany, and many other raving enthusiasts have exhibited.

And besides, we should remember, that impressions on our minds may be neither of our own producing, nor from an evil spirit, but from the common influences of the Spirit of God. The subjects of such impressions are of the number of those of whom we read, "who were once enlightened," had "tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost;" had "tasted the good word of God, and" had felt "the powers of the world to come;" but were yet wholly unacquainted with those "better things that accompany salvation," *Heb* vi. 4, 5, 9.

And where neither a good, nor an evil spirit has any immediate influence, persons, especially such as are of a weak habit of body, and whose minds are feeble, may have strange imaginations, and strong affections, for which they cannot account. Such persons are liable to impressions of this kind about temporal things; and there is equal reason to conclude, that they may have similar

impressions about spiritual things As a person, when asleep, has dreams of which he is not the voluntary agent; so, when he is awake, he may be the subject of impressions, of which also he is not the voluntary agent.

V. That they are produced by texts of scripture, suddenly, and in an extraordinary manner, applied to the mind, is no proof either that these our affections are truly gracious; or that they are not.

That they are occasioned by texts of scripture, thus impressed upon the mind, is no proof that affections are not gracious; provided those texts, or the truth contained in them, is the foundation of the emotion, and not mostly, or chiefly, the sudden and unusual manner in which they are brought to our minds.

But on the other hand; neither is their arising from scripture, brought suddenly, and in an extraordinary manner, to our minds, any proof that our affections about religion are gracious. Some persons seem to regard this, as a good evidence that their affections are saving, especially if those affections are hope or joy, or any other that are pleasing and delightful. They tell us that particular promises were suddenly brought to their minds, as if they had been spoken to them. "We had no hand," say they, "in bringing such texts to our minds; we were not thinking of any thing that could tend to produce such an occurrence," &c. And perhaps they will add; "One scripture came flowing in after another, the most pleasing and appropriate that could have been devised: we were full of joy, and could doubt no longer." Hence they conclude, that their affections are undoubtedly of the right kind, and that their state is really good.

What deceives, on this subject, many of the less informed and considerate kind of professors, seems to be this; the scriptures are the word of God, and therefore contain nothing but what is strictly true, and in its nature perfectly holy; and hence they conclude that that experience, which proceeds from the application of passages of the sacred writings, must be evangelical. But then it should be considered, that affections may arise, not properly from the scriptures, as their genuine fruit, and from a right application of them; but from an abuse of them. All that can be argued from the purity and veracity of the word of God, with regard to experience, is this;—that that experience which is agreeable to the word of God, cannot be wrong, and not that those affections must be right, which arise in consequence of the word of God coming to our minds.

Is there any proof that the devil cannot bring texts of scripture to the mind, and misapply them, for the purpose of deceiving? There appears to be nothing in this beyond the power of Satan. To impress letters, or sounds upon a person's imagination, is not a work of such mighty power, that nothing short of omnipotence can be sufficient to effect it.

Or does any person suppose, that texts of scripture are such sacred things, that the devil dares not abuse them? If they do, in this also they are mistaken. He who had temerity enough to take Christ himself to different places, into the wilderness,—on to a high mountain,—and on to a pinnacle of the temple, in order to tempt him, is not afraid to meddle with the scriptures, and to abuse them for his own purpose. At the same time that he took those liberties with Christ, he repeatedly quoted scripture, if possible, to deceive him.

And if Satan was permitted, and if he presumed to put Christ himself in mind of texts of scripture, for the purpose of tempting him, what reason have we to conclude, that he is not permitted, or that he dares not, put wicked men in mind of texts of scripture, to tempt and deceive *them?* And if Satan may thus abuse one text of scripture, he may another. Its being a very important passage, a comfortable, and precious promise alters not the case. And if he can bring one comfortable text to the mind, he may a thousand, and may select such scriptures as tend most to serve his purpose. He may add one scripture promise to another, tending, according to the perverse application he makes of them, effectually to remove the doubts, and to confirm the false joy and confidence of a poor deluded sinner.

We know that the ministers of Satan, heretical teachers, can, and do pervert the scriptures, to their own, and to the damnation of others, 2 *Pet.* iii. 16. They have the free use of scripture, and there is no text so precious and sacred, but they may abuse it to the eternal ruin of numerous souls. And there is no reason to conclude that the devil, as well as his instruments, is not permitted thus to abuse the scriptures. For when they do it, they do it at his instigation; and doubtless he himself does what he induces others to do: the servants of Satan only follow the steps of their master, and perform the same work which he himself performs.

As the devil can abuse the scriptures, to deceive and destroy men, so may their own folly and depravity. The sin which is in man, acts like its father. The hearts of men are deceitful like the devil, and concur in the use of those means which he adopts to deceive them.

It is evident then that we may have high affec-

tions, occasioned by texts of scripture coming suddenly, and in an extraordinary manner, to our minds, and yet these affections may not be holy, or any thing but the delusions of Satan.

I would further observe, that we may have elevated and joyful affections, coming *with* the word of God; and not only so, but *from* that word, and yet those affections may not proceed from Satan, nor from the depravity of our own hearts; but from some influence of the Spirit of God attending the word; and notwithstanding all this, those affections may possess nothing of the nature of saving religion. The stoney ground hearers had great joy, which is represented as arising from the word, as a blade of corn from its seed; and their affections had, in their appearance, a very great resemblance to those represented by the growth of the seed on the good ground; the difference not appearing, until it was discovered by the consequences in a time of trial. Yet there was no saving religion in those affections.

VI. That they are attended by an appearance of great love, is no proof either that our affections are truly gracious; or that they are not.

There are no professing Christians who regard this circumstance as an argument *against* the truth, and saving nature of their religious affections; but there are some who consider the appearance of great love, as a good evidence that their affections are from the sanctifying and saving influences of the Holy Spirit. They argue that Satan cannot love, this affection being directly contrary to his disposition. His very nature is enmity and malice. It is true, that nothing is more important and amiable than a spirit of true Christian love to God, and to men: it is more excellent than knowledge, or the gift of prophesying, or the power of

working miracles, or the ability to speak with the tongues of men and of angels. It is the chief grace of the Spirit of God, and the essence of all true religion. It is that by which we are most conformed to heaven, and most opposed to hell, and the devil. But notwithstanding this, we must not argue from hence that this affection has no counterfeit. It may be observed that the more excellent any thing is, the more likely is it to be imitated. For instance: there are more counterfeits of silver and gold, than of iron and copper. Though it is more difficult to produce a representation of what is really excellent, yet in proportion as any thing *is* excellent, will art and ingenuity be exercised in order to produce an exact resemblance. So it is with Christian virtues and graces; the ingenuity of Satan, and the deceitfulness of the human heart, are chiefly exercised in forming imitations of those which are of highest repute; hence perhaps no graces are more frequently counterfeited than love and humility.

With respect to the former of these, it is evident from scripture that we may possess a *kind* of religious love, and yet have no saving grace. Christ, speaking of those who possess this kind of affection, asserts that it will not continue, and that such professors will fail of salvation: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end shall be saved." *Matt.* xxiv. 12, 13.

We may appear to love God, with very strong affection, and yet have no grace. This was evidently the case with many of the Jews, who followed Jesus Christ day and night without meat, or drink, or sleep. They said, "Lord, we will follow thee withersoever thou goest," and cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David."

The Apostle seems to intimate that there were many in his days, who had a counterfeit love to Christ: "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." *Eph* vi. 24. In the original, the last word signifies *incorruption*.

So also Christian love to the people of God, may be counterfeited. The Galatians were ready to pluck out their eyes, and to give them to the Apostle; although he afterwards expresses his fear that their affections had come to nothing, and that he had bestowed upon them labour in vain. *Gal* iv. 11, 15.

VII. That we possess religious affections of different kinds, at the same time, is no proof either that those affections are truly gracious; or that they are not.

Though false religion is generally imperfect, or monstrous, and has not that entireness and symmetry of parts, which is to be seen in true religion; yet there may be a great variety of false affections existing together, bearing a very close resemblance to those which are gracious.

It is evident that all kinds of gracious affections may be counterfeited. For instance; love to God, and love to the brethren—Godly sorrow for sin: as in the cases of Pharaoh, Saul, and Ahab, and the children of Israel in the wilderness, *Exod.* ix. 27. 1 *Sam.* xxiv. 16, 17, and vi 21. 1 *Kings*, xxi. 27. *Numb.* xiv. 39, 40. The fear of God: as in the case of the Samaritans, who feared the Lord, and served their own gods at the same time, 2 *Kings*, xvii. 32, 33.—And, as in the case of those enemies of God, who, through the greatness of his power, submitted themselves to him; or, as it is in the Hebrew, lied unto him, that is, yielded to him a counterfeit reverence and submission, *Psa* lxvi. 3. Evangelical gratitude may be counterfeited: as,

in the case of the children of Israel, who sang the praises of God at the Red Sea, *Psa.* cvi. 12, and of Naaman the Syrian, after the miraculous cure of his leprosy, 2 *Kings*, v. 15, &c.

There may be counterfeits of spiritual joy: as, in the case of the stoney ground hearers, *Matt.* xiii. 20, and particularly, in the case of many of the hearers of John the Baptist. *John* v. 35.—Of zeal, as in the case of Jehu, 2 *Kings*, x. 16.—as in the case of Paul before his conversion, *Gal.* i. 14. *Phil.* iii. 6. and as in the case of the unbelieving Jews, *Acts* xxii. 3. *Rom.* x. 2. Graceless persons may have earnest religious desires, like the desires of Baalam, which he expressed under an extraordinary view of the happy state of the people of God, as distinguished from the rest of the world, *Num.* xxiii. 9, 10. They may also have a strong hope of eternal life; as the Pharisees had.

And as men, while in a state of nature, may have the resemblance of any kind of religious affection, so they may have the resemblance of different religious affections at the same time. Indeed, when any false affection is raised high, there are usually many such attending each other. The multitude who accompanied Christ into Jerusalem, after the raising of Lazarus, appeared to be influenced by different religious affections at the same time, and by each of them in a high degree; by admiration and love, united with reverence, when they placed their garments on the ground, that Christ might walk upon them;—by gratitude for the great works which he had done amongst them, when they praised him with loud voices;—by joy, when they made the city ring with their acclamations.—It is easy from the nature of our passions, to assign the reason, why, when one religious affection is raised very high, it should excite others, especially if that

affection is counterfeit love. For love is the fountain of all the other affections. Let us suppose the case of a person, who, for some time, has been in great terror through the fear of hell, distressed with dreadful apprehensions, and upon the very brink of despair; but who is all at once delivered; being fully persuaded, through some delusion of Satan, that God has pardoned and accepted him as an object of his love, and that he will certainly confer on him eternal life. What various passions would naturally crowd at once, or immediately one after another, into the mind of such a person. From mere principles of nature, it is easy to be accounted for, that the mind of a person thus circumstanced, should be raised with transports of joy, and elevated with fervent love, to that imaginary redeemer, who, he supposes, has thus rescued him from the jaws of destruction, and conferred upon him distinguishing privileges; and that now he should be so animated with admiration and gratitude, that, for a while, he can scarcely think, or speak of any thing else; that he should magnify God, and call upon others to rejoice with him; and that, though, before his deliverance, he was disposed to quarrel with the justice of God, now it should be easy for him to submit, and to acknowledge his own unworthiness. Saul, when Samuel told him that God had appointed him to be king, replied, "Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Wherefore then speakest thou so to me?" 1 *Sam.* ix. 21. This is similar to the language of David, a true saint: "Who am I, O Lord God! and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" 2 *Sam.* vii. 18.

Nor is it to be wondered at, that now such a one should delight to be with those who acknowledge,

and rejoice in the happiness of his present state; should love all such as esteem and admire him; should be ready to proclaim war with all who are not of his party, and like the Pharisees, should be disposed to compass sea and land in order to make one proselyte.

VIII. That comfort and joy appear to follow awakenings and convictions of conscience, in regular order, is no proof that religions affections are truly gracious; or that they are not.

Many persons are prejudiced against such religious experience, particularly if high affections of joy follow great distress and terror. But such prejudices derive no encouragement either from reason, or from scripture. Surely it cannot be unreasonable, that, before God delivers us from a state of sin, and liability to everlasting wo, he should give us some considerable sense of the evil from which he delivers us, in order that we may know and feel the importance of salvation, and be enabled to appreciate the value of what God is pleased to do for us. As those who are saved are successively in two extremely different states;—first in a state of condemnation,—and then, in a state of justification and blessedness;—and as God, in the salvation of men, deals with them as rational and intelligent creatures,—it appears agreeable to his wisdom, that those who are saved, should be made sensible of their being in those two different states. In the first place, that they should be made sensible of their state of condemnation; and afterwards, of their state of deliverance and happiness; that they should be made to feel their absolute need of a Saviour, and then be convinced of the sufficiency of Christ, and the perfect readiness with which God is always disposed to exercise mercy through him.

And that it is the manner of God, in dealing with men, first to lead them into the wilderness, and then to speak comfortably to them;—to bring them into distress, to make them feel their own helplessness, and absolute dependence on his power and grace, before he appears to work any deliverance for them is abundantly evident from scripture. Before God delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt, they were prepared for it by being made to see the wretchedness of their condition, and to cry unto him because of their hard bondage, *Exod.* ii. 23, and v 19. And before God wrought that great deliverance for them at the Red Sea, they were brought into great distress; the wilderness had shut them in, they could not turn either to the right hand or to the left, the Red Sea was before them, and the Egyptian host behind them; they were brought to see that they could do nothing for themselves, and that if God did not help them, they should be immediately swallowed up;—then God appeared, and turned their cries into songs. Instances of this kind, recorded in scripture, are numerous: see *Deut.* viii. 2—16. *Luke*, viii. 43, 44. *Matt.* xv. 22. 2 *Cor.* i. 8—10. *Matt.* viii. 24—26. *Lev* xiii. 45. *Jer.* iii. 23—25

And if we consider those extraordinary manifestations which God made of himself to some of the saints of old, we shall find that their case was exactly similar. It was so with Abraham: first a "horror of great darkness fell upon him;" and then God revealed himself to him in the most animating promise, *Gen.* xv. 12, 13. It was so with Moses at Mount Sinai: first, God appeared to him in all the terrors of his dreadful majesty, so that this eminent servant of the Lord, said, "I exceedingly fear and tremble;" and then he made all his goodness to pass before him, and proclaimed his

name, "The Lord God, merciful and gracious," &c. It was so with Elijah: first, there was a stormy wind, and earthquake, and devouring fire; and then a still, small voice, 1 *Kings*, xix 11, 12. It was so with Daniel: he first saw the countenance of Christ, as lightning, which terrified and caused him to faint away; and then he was strengthened and refreshed by such comfortable words as these, "O, Daniel, a man greatly beloved, fear not; peace be unto thee; be strong, yea, be strong," *Dan.* x. ii 19.

But there are many things in scripture, which more *directly* show, that this is the ordinary way in which God manifests himself through Christ, in the work of grace, on the hearts of sinners. The prodigal son spends all he has, is brought to feel his circumstances, to humble himself, and to own his unworthiness, before he is received and feasted by his father *Luke* xv 11, &c. The servant who owed his lord ten thousand talents, is first reminded of his debt, sentenced to be sold, with his wife and his children, in order that payment may be made; and thus he is humbled and brought to own the whole debt to be just; and then all is forgiven him. Our first parents, after they had sinned, were terrified by the majesty and justice of God; and had their sin, with its aggravtion, set before them by their judge, before they were relieved by the promise of the seed of the woman. It seems to be the natural import of the word gospel, *glad tidings*, that it is news of deliverance and salvation, after great fear and distress.

And if it is really the way in which God proceeds, before he communicates the comfort of deliverance, to give men a considerable sense of the greatness of their sins, and the dreadful nature of the punishment to which they are exposed; surely it is

not unreasonble to suppose that persons, at least in general, while under these impressions, should have great distress, and terrible apprehensions of mind.

From these things it appears to be very unreasonable in professing Christians, to object against the spiritual nature of comfortable and joyful affections, because they were preceded by alarming apprehensions and great distress of mind.

And on the other hand, we must not conclude that comfort and joy are of the right kind, because they succeed great terrors and dreadful fears of hell. Some persons lay considerable weight upon this circumstance; regarding great terrors as an evidence of a great work of the law wrought upon the heart, well preparing the mind for solid comfort; not considering that terror, and a conviction of conscience, are different things. For though convictions of conscience often produce terror, they do not consist in it: terrors not unfrequently arise from other causes. Convictions of conscience, produced by the Spirit of God, consist in convictions of sin, both as it respects the disposition and the practice; and of the dreadful guilt of sin, as committed against a God of infinite holiness, and strict justice, and who therefore cannot allow it to go unpunished. But there are some persons who have frightful apprehensions of hell, who appear to have very slight convictions of the sinfulness of their hearts and lives. The devil, if permitted, can terrify men as well as the Spirit of God: it is a work natural to him, and he has many ways of performing it so as to produce no good.

The terrors which some persons experience, are very much owing to their particular constitutions and tempers. Nothing is more manifest, than that some persons are of such a temper and

frame of mind, that their imaginations are more strongly impressed with every thing that affects them, than the imaginations of others would be under similar circumstances. The impression on their imaginations, re-acts on their affections and raises those still higher; and so affection and imagination operate reciprocally, till the latter is raised to an extravagant height. Such persons lose all possession of themselves.

Some professors speak of the clear view they have of their wickedness, who, if we examine them, prove to have little or no convictions of conscience. They complain of a dreadfully hard heart, when in reality they tell none of those things wherein the hardness of the human heart consists. They complain of a dreadful load of sin, and of deep depravity, when they have no view of any thing wherein the heinous nature of sin, and the depravity of the human heart consist. They tell us how their sins are set in order before them, when in reality they are not penitentially affected by any one sin of which they have been guilty.

If persons have great terrors, which really proceed from the awakening and convincing influence of the Spirit of God, it does not thence follow that their terrors *must necessarily* issue in true comfort. The unmortified depravity of the heart, may quench the Spirit of God, and thus lead to presumptuous and self-exalting hopes.

Again, if comfort and joy, not only follow great alarm and terror, but, if there is also an appearance of such preparatory convictions and humiliation, arising very distinctly, in such order, and in such a way, as have frequently been observed in true converts;—this is no certain proof that the light and comfort which follow, are evangelical and saving;—and for these reasons.

1. As the devil can counterfeit the operations and graces of the Holy Spirit, so he can counterfeit whatever is preparatory to the communications of grace. If Satan can counterfeit those operations of the Spirit of God, which are special and sanctifying; much more easily can he imitate those which are common, and of which men, while they are yet his own children, are not unfrequently the subjects. It is abundantly evident, that there is false humility as well as false comfort. Saul, though a very wicked man, of a haughty spirit, and a great king, when brought, by the conviction of sin, to condemn himself before David, one of his subjects, and one whom he had long hated and treated as an enemy, cries out, "Thou art more righteous than I; for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil!" And at another time, "I have sinned,—I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly," 1 *Sam.* xxiv. 16, 17, and xxvi. 21. And yet Saul, at that time, seems to have had very little of the divine influences, this being after the Spirit of God had departed from him, and an evil spirit had troubled him. If then this proud monarch was brought to humble himself so low, before a subject whom he hated; we may doubtless, exhibit appearances of great conviction and humiliation before God, while we yet remain enemies to him. There is often, in men who are terrified through the fear of hell, a great appearance of being brought from a dependence on their own righteousness, when they are not in all respects brought from such dependence. They have only exchanged one way of trusting in their own righteousness, for another, which is less obvious. Very often a great degree of discouragement, as to some things upon which they were accustomed to depend, is taken for humiliation, and denominated

submission to God; though it is no real submission, but arises from some secret compromise, which is difficult to be discovered.

2. If the operations of the Holy Spirit, in the conviction and comfort of real converts, may be counterfeited, the *order* of them may also be counterfeited. When counterfeits are made, no divine power is needed for the purpose of arranging them in a certain order; and therefore no order or method of operation and experience, is any certain proof of their divinity.

3. We have no decisive rule by which we can ascertain how far the Spirit of God may proceed in the work of conviction, without producing a real conversion. There is no necessary connexion between any thing that a natural man may experience, and the saving grace of the Holy Spirit. And therefore we do not find that any legal convictions, or any comforts following such convictions, in any certain method or order, are ever mentioned in scripture as a certain proof of grace, or any thing peculiar to the saints; although we do find that gracious operations and effects themselves, are so mentioned times almost without number. This should be enough with Christians; they should be willing to receive the word of God, rather than their own experience and conjectures, as their sufficient guide, in judging of their state in the sight of God.

4. Experience very powerfully strengthens the conclusion, that persons seeming to have convictions and comfort following each other in such a method and order, as may frequently be observed in true converts, is no proof of grace. I appeal, upon this subject, to those ministers who have had much to do with souls in the late extraordinary season. They will affirm, I have no doubt, that

they have known many who do not prove well, who gave a fair account of their experience, and seemed to have been converted in that order and method which has generally been insisted on, as the order in which the Spirit of God operates in conversion.

And as the appearance of this distinctness and regularity with regard to method, is no certain proof that a person is converted; so the absence of it is no decisive evidence that a person is not converted. For though it might be made evident, on scripture principles, that a sinner cannot be brought heartily to receive Christ as his Saviour, who is not convinced of his sin, his helplessness, and his just desert of eternal condemnation; and that therefore such convictions must be some way included in what is wrought in his soul; yet nothing proves it to be necessary, that all those things which are pre-supposed, or implied in an act of faith in Christ, must be wrougth in the soul, in so many successive and separate works of the Spirit, that shall be each one obvious and manifest; on the contrary, some times the change at first, is like a confused chaos, so that we know not what to make of it. The manner in which the Holy Spirit operates in those who are born of God, is very often exceedingly mysterious: the effects only of those operations are discernible. It is to be feared that some have gone too far in attempting to direct the Spirit of the Lord, and to mark out his footsteps for him. Experience clearly shows that we cannot trace the operations of the Holy Spirit, in the conversion of some, who afterwards prove the best of Christians. He does not proceed discernibly in the steps of any particular, established scheme, at all so often as is imagined. A rule received and established by common consent, has very great, though to many persons, an insensible influence in forming their notions

of the process of their own experience. I know very well how they proceed as to this matter, for I have had frequent opportunities of observing their conduct. Very often their experience, at first, appears like a confused chaos, but then those parts are selected which bear the nearest resemblance to such particular steps as are insisted on; and these are dwelt upon in their thoughts, and spoken of from time to time, till they grow more and more conspicuous in their views, and other parts which are neglected grow more and more obscure. Thus what they have experienced is insensibly strained, so as to bring it to an exact conformity to the scheme already established in their minds. And it becomes natural also for ministers, who have to deal with those who insist upon distinctness and clearness of method, to do so too. But yet so much has been seen of the operations of the Spirit of God of late, that those who have had much to do with souls, and are not blinded by system, must know, that the Holy Spirit is so exceedingly various in the manner of his operations, that, in many cases, it is impossible to trace him.

What we have principally to do with, in our enquiries into our own state, or in the directions we give to others, is the nature of the effects which God has produced in the soul. We are often, in scripture, directed to try ourselves by the nature of the fruits of the Spirit; but no where by the method in which the Spirit produces those fruits. Many persons greatly err in their notions of a clear work of conversion; calling that clear, in which the successive steps of influence, and the method of experience, are most discernible; whereas that is the clearest work of conversion, in which the spiritual nature of the work is most evident.

IX. That they lead us to spend much time about

religion, and to be zealously engaged in the duties of public worship, is no proof either that our affections relative to these things are truly gracious; or that they are not.

That they spend so much time in reading, praying, singing, hearing sermons, and similar exercises, has, of late, been urged as an argument against the religious affections of some professors. It is clear from scripture, that true grace very much tends to produce in us a delight in such religious exercises. This was the case with Anna the prophetess: "She departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings, and prayer night and day," *Luke* ii. 37. This was the case also with the primitive Christians in Jerusalem: "and they continued daily with one accord in the temple: and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God," *Acts* ii. 46, 47. Grace disposed Daniel to delight in the duty of prayer, and to attend to it solemnly three times a day. It had the same effect with regard to David: "Evening, morning and at noon will I pray," *Psa* lv. 17. Grace disposes the saints to delight in singing the praises of God: "Praise ye the Lord; for *it is* good to sing praises unto our God: for *it is* pleasant, *and* praise is comely," *Psa.* cxlvii 1. See also *Psa.* cxxxv. 3 It disposes them to love the publick worship of God: "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, the place where thine honour dwelleth," *Psa.* xxvi. 8. See also *Psa.* xxvii. 4, and lxxxiv.

This is the nature and tendency of true grace. —But on the other hand, our being disposed to abound in the external exercises of religion, and to spend much time in them, is no certain proof of grace; because such a disposition is found in many persons who are evidently not gracious. The

Israelites of old, whose services were abominable to God, attended the new moons, and sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies: they spread forth their hands and made many prayers, *Isa.* i. 12—15. The Pharisees made long prayers, and fasted twice in the week. False religious affections may lead persons to be loud and earnest in prayer: "Ye shall not fast as *ye do this* day, to cause your voice to be heard on high," *Isa.* lviii. 4. A kind of religion which is not spiritual or saving, may cause men to delight in religious duties and ordinances: "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice: they take delight in approaching to God," *Isa.* lviii. 2. Persons under the influence of false religion, may delight in hearing the word of God preached. This was the case with the hearers of Ezekiel: "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee *as* my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, *but* their heart goeth after their covetousness. And lo, thou *art* unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not," *Ezek.* xxxiii. 31, 32. See also *Mark*, vi. 20. *John*, v. 35.

Experience shows that persons, from the influence of false systems of theology, may be induced to abound in the external services of religion, so as to devote almost the whole of their time to them. Formerly, a sort of people were very numerous in the Romish church, called recluses, who forsook the society of mankind, and shut themselves up in narrow cells; vowing never more to

see the face of any human being, (except in case of sickness) and to spend all their days in the exercises of devotion, and converse with God. There were also in former times, a great number of Hermits and Anchorites, who forsook the world in order to spend their days in religious contemplation, and in the exercises of devotion in lonely desarts. Some of them had no dwelling places, but the caves in the mountains, nor any food, but the spontaneous productions of the earth.—I once lived at the next door to a Jew, who appeared to be the devoutest person I ever saw: a great part of his time was spent in acts of devotion, at his eastern window, where he seemed to be most earnestly engaged, not only in the day time, but even sometimes during a whole night together.

X. That they very much dispose us to praise, and in words to glorify God, is no proof that our most zealous affections are truly gracious; or that they are not. This indeed is implied in what has just now been observed; but as great stress has been laid upon this circumstance, I thought it deserved a more particular consideration.

No Christian will make it an argument *against* any professor, that he seems to have such a disposition; neither can it with propriety be regarded as an evidence *in favour* of any professor; if it is duly considered, that without grace we may possess high affections towards God, and in consequence of this, may be inclined to speak much and very earnestly about those things by which we are affected. It will appear more evidently that this is no certain indication of grace, if we consider the information which the scriptures give upon this subject. See *Mark*, ii. 12, ix. 8. *Luke*, v. 26. *Matt.* xv. 31. *Luke*, vii. 16, iv. 15. The multitude praised the Lord Jesus with loud voices, a

little before he was crucified, crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, hosanna in the highest." And we are told that after the ascension of Christ, when the Apostles had healed the impotent man, "all *men* glorified God for that which was done," *Acts*, iv. 21. When the Gentiles, in Antioch of Pisidia, heard from Paul and Barnabas, that God would reject the Jews, and take the Gentiles to be his people, they "glorified the word of the Lord;" but all who did so were not true believers. See *Acts*, xiii. 48. The children of Israel sang the praises of God at the Red Sea, but they soon forgat his works.

That we are greatly affected by the unmerited favour of God, and are very much disposed to extol and magnify free grace, is no certain proof that we are graciously affected. Those who yet remain with unmortified pride and enmity against God, may exclaim against their unworthiness, and magnify his undeserved goodness to them, from no higher a principle than that which actuated Saul; who, while he remained with unsubdued enmity against David, was brought to cry out, "I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly;" and with great apparent affection and admiration, to extol the unmerited kindness of David towards him, 1 *Sam.* xxiv. 16—19, and xxvi. 21. The account we have of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius, are illustrative of this subject. See *Dan.* iii. 28—30 iv. 1, 2, 3, 34, 35, 37, and vi. 25—27

XI. That they fill us with strong confidence, as to the divine origin of our experience, and the safety of our state, is no proof either that our religious affections are truly gracious; or that they are not.

It is argued by some, that those persons are de-

luded, who profess to be assured of the goodness of their state, and to have no doubts respecting their interest in the favour of God. They suppose that there is no such thing to be expected in the Church of God, as a full assurance of hope; unless it is under some very extraordinary circumstances. This is contrary to the doctrine of the first Protestants, maintained by their most celebrated writers against the Papists; as well as contrary to the whole tenor of scripture. It is very evident, that assurance was a common privilege with the saints of whom we have a particular account in scripture. God in the clearest and most positive manner, revealed and testified his special favour to Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Moses, Daniel and others. Job often speaks of his sincerity and uprightness with the greatest confidence, frequently calling God to witness. "I know," says he, "*that* my Redeemer liveth, and *that*—I shall see him for myself, and not another." *Job*, xix. 25, &c. David, in the book of Psalms, speaks almost every where, without any hesitation, and in the most confident manner, of God as his God; glorying in him as his portion and heritage, his rock and confidence, his shield and high tower, &c. &c. Hezekiah appeals to God, as knowing that he had "walked before him in truth and with a perfect heart," *2 Kings* xx. 3. Jesus Christ, in his last discourse with his eleven disciples, often declares his special and everlasting love to them, in the clearest terms; and promises them a future participation with him in his glory, in the most absolute manner. This he did, as he tells them, that their joy might be full. *John*, xv. 11. See also xvi. 33. He concluded this discourse with a prayer, in which he speaks of them to his Father in their presence, as having all of them savingly known him. He declares that

they were not of the world, and that he spake these things to the end, that his joy might be fulfilled in them. Hence it appears agreeable to the designs of Christ, and his various dispensations in reference to his Church, that his saints should have the full assurance of their future glory.

The Apostle Paul, throughout all his epistles, speaks in the language of assurance; perpetually declaring his special relation to Christ, his Lord, and Master, and Redeemer, and invariably expressing his firm expectation of the future and everlasting reward. It would be almost endless to notice all the passages to this effect, which might be enumerated: I will mention four only; "Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me," *Gal.* ii. 20. "For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain," *Phil.* i. 21. "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day," 2 *Tim.* i. 12 "I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge" will "give me at that day," 2 *Tim.* iv. 7, 8.

The nature of the covenant of grace, and the declared intention of God in the appointment and constitution of that covenant, clearly show that ample provision has been made, in order that the saints may enjoy an assured hope of eternal life.—This covenant is "ordered in all things and sure." The promises are explicit, and often repeated. The design of God in this provision is, no doubt, that the heirs of promise may have a full assurance of their future glory: "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the

immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which *it was* impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us," *Heb.* vi. 17, 18.—But all this would be in vain, as to any such purpose, if the knowledge of our interest in them, in ordinary cases, was not attainable. For the promises of God, let them be ever so certain as to their accomplishment, can afford strong hope and consolation, only so far as we enjoy the assurance of their applying to ourselves. And in vain is provision made in Jesus Christ, that believers may be perfect as pertaining to the conscience, *Heb.* ix. 9, if assurance of freedom from the guilt of sin, is not attainable.

It further appears that assurance is not only attainable in some extraordinary, but also in ordinary cases; for believers, in general, are exhorted to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure, 2 *Pet.* i. 5, 10. It is spoken of as something very blameable in Christians, not to know whether Christ be in them or not: "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" 2 *Cor.* xiii. 5. St. Paul says, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly." 1 *Cor.* ix. 26. And to add no more, it is evident, that Christians may in general know their interest in the saving benefits of Christianity, because the Apostles tell us by what means *they* did so: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God," 1 *Cor.* ii. 12. "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments," 1 *John*, ii. 3. "But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily the love of God is perfected: hereby we know that we are in him."

ver. 5. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren," iii. 14. "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him," ver. 14. "Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us," ver. 24. See also iv. 13, and v. 2, and 19.

It must, therefore, be very unreasonable to conclude that persons are hypocrites, merely because they appear to have no doubt of their salvation.

On the other hand, there is no sufficient reason to conclude that men are saints, and that their affections are gracious, merely because those affections are attended by a high degree of confidence.—Nothing can be argued from such confidence, let it be ever so strong. If we observe a person, who frequently, and without any hesitation, speaks in the most familiar and appropriating language in prayer; who uses the most confident expressions as to the goodness of his state; who appears to have done forever with self-examination; and who is disposed to be angry with those who intimate their doubts as to his spiritual safety; we may, with a high degree of probability, conclude that all is not well. Such lofty, violent confidence as this, is not true Christian assurance; it savours more of the spirit of the Pharisees, who never doubted of their being the most eminent of saints; and who, when Christ intimated that they were spiritually blind, despised the suggestion, *John*, ix. 40. If such persons had more of the spirit of the Publican, their confidence would have more of the assurance of one who humbly trusts in Christ, and has no confidence in himself. If we do but consider the natural state of the human mind, and how much the unregenerate are under the influence of spiritual blindness, and self-flattery; we shall not at all wonder at the

high opinion which they entertain of their own goodness, and the confidence with which they express themselves, as to the safety of their religious circumstances before God.

When hypocrites are established in a false hope, they have not those things to disturb their confidence, which are often the occasion of doubt to the real saint. They have not that deep sense of the vast importance of a sure foundation, and that dread of being deceived. The comforts of a true saint promote caution, and a solemn impression upon the mind, of the infinite holiness, justice and omniscience of the supreme Judge. But false comforts banish these things, and dreadfully stupify the mind.–The hypocrite has not the knowledge of his own blindness, and the deceitfulness of his own heart; nor that low opinion of his own understanding, which the real saint possesses.—The devil does not assault the hope of the hypocrite, as he does the hope of the true believer. Satan is a great enemy to evangelical hope, not only as it tends greatly to the comfort of him who possesses it, but also as it tends very much to promote and cherish grace in the heart, and stimulate to strictness and diligence in the Christian life. But he is no enemy to the hope of a hypocrite, as this principle tends very much to establish his interest in those who are under its influence. A hypocrite may retain his hope unmolested: the devil never attempts to disturb it. But perhaps there is no true Christian, whose hope is not assailed by Satan. He tempted Christ; and the servant is not above his master, nor the disciple above his Lord. He who entertains a false hope, has not that conviction of his depravity, which the saint possesses of his. The sins of a real Christian, appear to him with all their aggravations; and it often seems a very

mysterious thing to him, that any grace can be consistent with such depravity. But a false hope hides corruption, so that the hypocrite appears clean in his own eyes.

There are two kinds of hypocrites; the one are deceived by their morality, and external religion; the other are deceived by false discoveries and elevations of mind. The latter often declaim against dependence on good works, and talk much of free grace; but at the same time make a righteousness of their discoveries and experience. These two kinds of professors, Mr. Shepard, in his Exposition of the parable of the ten virgins, distinguishes by the names of *legal* and *evangelical* hypocrites; and often speaks of the latter as being in a worse state than the former. It is evident that the latter are by far the more confident in their hope; and I have scarcely known an instance of professors of this description being undeceived. The chief ground of the confidence of many of them, is the very same kind of impulses, and imagined revelations, which some of late have had concerning future events They call these suggestions respecting the goodness of their state, the witness of the Spirit; entirely misunderstanding the nature of that witness, as I shall show hereafter. Visions and impulses about other things have generally been such as were desired and expected; and no wonder that persons who give heed to them, have the same kind of discoveries and impressions about their eternal salvation; especially if they earnestly seek, and expect them. Neither is it any wonder that, when they have such imagined revelations of the goodness of their state, they should be filled with the highest degree of confidence. They suppose that the great JEHOVAH has declared certain things to them; and

that, having his immediate testimony, a strong confidence is the highest virtue. Hence they despise all argument, and inquiry respecting their own state. It is easy to be accounted for, that impressions and impulses, so pleasing, so suited to their self-love, as those by which such professors are assured that they are the dear children of God, distinguished by his favour beyond most of the world, should make them extremely confident; especially when, with these impulses, they have high affections, which they take to be eminent exercises of grace. I have known several persons, who have had strong desires for something of a temporal nature, and they have earnestly pursued the object of their wishes, but have met with great difficulties, and many discouragements. At length, they had an impression, or imagined revelation, assuring them that they should obtain what they sought; they regarded this as a sure promise from the Most High, and became ridiculously confident, in opposition to every principle of reason, and while all events were working against them. And why may not persons who are seeking assurance with regard to everlasting blessings, be deceived by similar delusive impressions; and become confident of the goodness of their state in the same way?

The confidence of many of those, whom Mr. Shepard calls evangelical hypocrites. is like the confidence of some mad men, who imagine that they are kings; they maintain their delusion in direct opposition to evidence and reason. And in one sense this confidence is much more immoveable than a truly gracious assurance: the latter is not maintained but as the soul is kept in a holy frame, and grace continues in lively exercise. If the actings of grace decay in the Christian, and

he falls into a lifeless frame, he loses his assurance; but the confidence of the hypocrite is not shaken by sin. Some hypocrites, at least, maintain their hope in the most unchristian frame, and in the pursuit of the most abandoned conduct.

And here I cannot but observe, that there are certain doctrines, frequently delivered from the pulpit, which ought to be mentioned with more caution and explanation than they generally are; for as they are understood by many, they tend greatly to establish this delusion and false confidence. The doctrines to which I allude, are those of Christians living by faith, and not by sight; their giving glory to God, by trusting him in the dark; living upon Christ, and not upon experience; not making their good frames the foundation of their faith, &c.— These are important doctrines rightly understood, but destructive as many understand them. The scriptures speak of living, or walking by faith, and not by sight; by which is meant, a being governed by a respect to eternal things, which are the objects of faith; and not by a respect to temporal things, which are the objects of sight. This will be evident to any one who examines those parts of scripture which speak of *faith* in opposition to *sight*. See 2 *Cor.* iv. 18, v. 7. *Heb.* xi. 8, 13, 17, 27, 29. *John*, xx. 29. But this doctrine is understood by many, as if professors ought firmly to trust in Christ, without spiritual light, and although they are in a lifeless frame, and for the present have no gracious experience. It is the duty of those who are thus in darkness, to come out of that state. That they should confidently believe and trust, while they remain without spiritual light, is an unscriptural and absurd doctrine. The scriptures are ignorant of any faith in Christ of the operation of God, which is not founded on a spiritual sight of Christ.

That trust in Christ, which accompanies a title to everlasting life, is a seeing the Son, and believing on him, *John*, vi. 40. True faith in Christ is never exercised any further than persons behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and have the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ, 2 *Cor.* iii. 18, iv. 6. They into whose minds the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, does not shine, do not believe, 2 *Cor.* iv. 4. That faith, which is without spiritual light, is not the faith of the children of light, and of the day; but the presumption of the children of darkness. Hence it appears, that to urge professors to believe, without any spiritual light, tends greatly to help forward the delusions of the prince of darkness. Men not only cannot exercise faith without some spiritual light, but they can exercise faith only just in proportion as they have spiritual light. They will trust in God only as they know him; and they cannot exercise faith in him any further than they possess a believing view of his faithfulness and all-sufficiency: nor can they exercise trust in him, any further than they are in a gracious frame.—They who are in a dead, carnal frame, doubtless ought to trust in God,—because that would be the same thing as coming out of their bad frame, and turning to God; but to exhort men to trust confidently in God, though they are not in a gracious frame, is the same thing in effect, as to exhort them to trust, not with a holy confidence, but with a wicked presumption. It is just as impossible, for men to have a strong and lively faith in God, when they have no sensible experience, as it is for them to be in the lively exercise of grace, without the influence of grace.

It is indeed the duty of the people of God, to trust in him, when they are in darkness, when the

aspect of his providence is gloomy, and when, in this respect, he appears to have forsaken them. We ought to trust him. when we do not see, which way it is possible for him to fulfil his word; when every thing but his promise, seems to render the fulfilment unlikely, so that we have to hope against hope. Thus the ancient Patriarchs; thus Job, and the Psalmist, and Jeremiah, and Daniel; thus Shadrach, and Meshach and Abednego; and the Apostle Paul, gave glory to God by trusting him, though all was darkness around them. We have many instances of such victorious faith in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews. But this is a different thing from trusting in God, without spiritual light.

There are different kinds of spiritual light; hence there *is* such a thing as our trusting in God, and also knowing the goodness of our state, while we are destitute of some kinds of experience. As for instance: we may have clear views of the sufficiency and faithfulness of God, and so confidently trust in him, and know that we are his children; and at the same time have not those strong perceptions of his love, as at other times. It was thus with Christ in his last passion.—We may have such a view of the sovereignty, holiness and all-sufficiency of God, as enables us quietly to submit to him, and exercise hope in him, while we are not fully satisfied as to the goodness of our state. But this also is different from trusting confidently in God, without spiritual light or experience.

Those who thus insist on our living by faith, when we have no experience, and are in a bad frame, are also very absurd in their notions of faith. What they mean by faith, is believing that they are in a good state. Hence they count it a dreadful sin for any one to doubt as to his spiritual safety, whatever frame he is in, and though his life is not

at all exemplary, because this is the great and heinous sin of unbelief; and, according to their opinion, he is the best man, and most effectually honours God, who maintains his hope with the greatest confidence, when he has the least light or experience, and is in the most anti-christian frame,—because this is an evidence of strong faith, giving glory to God, and against hope believing in hope. But from whence do they learn, that faith is our believing with confidence that our state is good? If this is faith, the Pharisees had faith in an eminent degree, some of whom Christ assures us committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost. The scriptures represent faith, as that by which men are brought *into* a good state; and therefore it cannot be the same thing, as believing that they *are already* in a good state. To suppose that faith consists in believing that we are spiritually safe, is in effect the same thing, as to suppose that faith consists in believing that we have faith, or in believing that we believe.

Our doubting may, indeed, in several respects, arise from unbelief. It may be from unbelief, or because our faith is so small, that we have so little evidence of the goodness of our state. If we had more experience of the actings of faith, and consequently more experience of the exercise of grace, we should have clearer evidence that our state is good, and so our doubts would be removed.—Again; our doubts are from unbelief, when, though there are many things in us which present favourable indications of a work of grace, we still doubt whether we are really in a state of favour with God or not, because we are so unworthy, and have done so much to provoke him to anger. Our doubts in such a case arise from unbelief, as they spring from the want of a sufficient reliance on the infi-

nite riches of the grace of God, and the sufficiency of Christ for the salvation of the chief of sinners—Our doubts arise from unbelief, when we question the goodness of our state, because of the mysteriousness of the divine dispensations towards us; or when we doubt whether we have an interest in the promises, because, from the aspect of divine providence, they appear so unlikely to be fulfilled. Such doubts arise from a want of dependence upon the power, the knowledge and the wisdom of God. But yet in such cases, our unbelief and our doubts are not the same thing: one arises from the other.

Persons are greatly to blame for doubting as to the goodness of their state, on such grounds as these: they are to blame that they have no more grace—no more of the experience and present exercise of grace, as an evidence to themselves of the goodness of their state. Men are doubtless to blame for being in a carnal, dead frame; but when they are in such a frame, under the prevalence of their lusts, and an unchristian spirit, they are not to blame for doubting. It is impossible in the nature of things, that a holy, Christian hope, should be kept alive, in its clearness, and strength, under such circumstances. Past experience, when darkened by prevailing depravity, will never keep alive a gracious confidence. Nor is it at all to be lamented, that persons, under such circumstances, should feel doubts respecting their state: it is desirable, and quite right that they should doubt. It is agreeable to that wise and merciful constitution of things, which God has established, that, when the love of his people decays, fear should arise; for *then* they have need of that fear to restrain them from sin, and to stir them up to watchfulness and diligence in religion. God has also so ordered

it, that when love is in vigorous exercise, fear should be expelled; for *then* they do not need it, having a more effectual principle in exercise, to restrain them from sin, and to stir them up to duty. No principle, except fear or love, will effectually influence the human conduct; and therefore, if the former of these should not prevail as the latter decays, the people of God, when fallen into a cold and lifeless frame, would be lamentably exposed indeed As light and darkness, in the constitution of the universe, necessarily succeed each other, and as in proportion as light decreases, so darkness prevails; so it is in the economy of grace; if divine love decays, and corruption prevails, hope also decays, and doubts prevail; and if, on the contrary, divine love prevails, and is in lively exercise, hope is revived, corruption is subdued, and fear is expelled. Love is the spirit of adoption, or the child-like principle; fear is the spirit of bondage, or the servile principle; if love declines, fear prevails; and so on the contrary. If love rises to a great height, it drives away all fear, and produces full assurance. "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear," *John*, iv. 18. These two opposite principles are productive of hope, or despondency, in proportion as either of them prevails, at least when they are left to their natural influence, without something adventitious, or accidentally intervening: as the distemper of melancholy, doctrinal ignorance, prejudices of education, wrong instruction, false principles, strong temptation, &c. When fear prevails, owing to the low state of our love, it is in vain to pore over our past experience, in order to establish our peace, and obtain assurance. It is contrary to the design of God that we should possess assurance under such circumstances.

Those therefore directly thwart the wise and gracious constitution of things, who, under a notion of living by faith, and not by works, exhort others to be confident in their hope, when in a cold and lifeless frame; and urge them not to doubt of the goodness of their state, lest they should be guilty of the dreadful sin of unbelief. This has a direct tendency to establish the most presumptuous hypocrites, and to prevent them from ever calling their state in question. Doubtless great mischief has been done in this way.

We cannot be said to live upon our experience, merely because we use it, as an evidence of grace; for there is no other evidence which ought to be relied on. Persons may be said to live upon their experience, when they make a righteousness of it; and instead of keeping their eyes on the glory of God, and the excellency of Christ, turn them from these objects to their own attainments and experience; and when, in their own estimation, they are rich, and increased in goods and have need of nothing, and think that God admires them on the same account that they admire themselves. This is more abominable in the sight of the Most High, than the gross immoralities of those who make no profession of religion. This conduct, however, is far different from merely using our experience, as an evidence of our interest in the Redeemer.

XII. That the manifestation of them, and the account given of them, are very pleasing and affecting to the really pious; and such as tend greatly to procure their good opinion and esteem, is no proof either that our affections are truly gracious; or that they are not.

The saints have not such a spirit of discernment as to ascertain with certainty who are godly, and

who are not; for though they know experimentally what true religion is, none of them can feel or perceive the exercises of it in the hearts of others. Nothing in others can come within their view, but outward manifestations; and the scriptures clearly intimate that to judge from appearances, is, at best, but uncertain, and liable to deception: "*The* LORD *seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord, on the heart," 1 *Sam.* xvi. 7 They are but poor judges, and dangerous counsellors, in cases of the soul, who are precipitate in deciding as to the real state of any particular professor. They betray one or more of these three things;—little experience;—a weak judgment;—or a great degree of self confidence. Wise and experienced men proceed with greater caution.

It is the duty of the saints, to receive those who exhibit a credible appearance of piety; and to love them, and rejoice in them, as their brethren in Christ Jesus. But the best of men may be deceived. It often happiness that brilliant professors, who are received into the church of Christ as eminent saints, fall away, so that their profession comes to nothing. At this we shall not wonder, if we consider what has been already observed. A man, who is without a spark of grace, may have religious affections of many kinds together; a sort of love to God, and to the brethren, bearing a strong resemblance to real love; he may have sorrow for sin, self-abasement, gratitude, joy, ardent desires, and zeal for the interest of religion and the good of souls. And these affections may follow awakenings and convictions of conscience; a kind of love and joy may follow them, and one another, just in the same order as is commonly observed in the holy affections of true converts.

These affections may be very strong, so as to make those who are the subjects of them affectionate, fervent, and ready in speaking of the things of God. They may be attended by many texts of scripture, deeply impressed upon the mind, so as to induce those who are the subjects of this experience, in a very ardent manner, to praise God, and to call upon others to join them; to declaim against their unworthiness, and to extol free grace; to abound in the duties of religion, such as prayer, hearing the word preached, singing, and religious conversation; and these things may be attended by a great degree of confidence. I may add, that all these things may be accompanied by a good natural temper, and a clear doctrinal knowledge of religion; and from a long acquaintance with the phraseology used in reference to experimental religion, such professors may have acquired the habit of expressing themselves upon this subject as the saints usually do—I think it has been made evident, that there may be all these things, and yet nothing more than the common influences of the Spirit of God, abused by the delusions of Satan, and the deceitfulness of the human heart. The resemblance between a hypocrite and a real saint, may indeed be very great. It is the sole prerogative of the omniscient God, as the great searcher of hearts, to separate with accuracy the sheep from the goats.

Many persons seem to place great weight upon the following circumstance, and suppose it sufficient to decide with respect to the state of others; that is, when not only a plausible story is told, but when, in giving an account of experience, such a representation is made as harmonizes with their own experience, so that their hearts are affected and delighted by what they hear, and their love

drawn out towards the persons making the relation. But there is not that certainty in these things which many persons imagine, nor ought any confidence to be placed in them. A real saint greatly delights in holiness ; and the work of God in renewing and making holy and happy, a soul, before hastening to endless perdition, appears to him a glorious work: no wonder that he is greatly affected when he hears a professor give a probable account of this work on his own heart, and sees in him favourable appearances of holiness ; whether those appearances are attended by a real work of grace, or not. If the words which are in general adopted to express religious affection, are used ; if many things are related as following one another in an order agreeable to the experience of him who hears; and, if this relation is made with an air of confidence ; it is no wonder if a favourable opinion is formed as to the state of him who relates his experience. And if, besides all this, the relation is made with much affection ; and above all, if in speaking, much affection towards him who is spoken to, is manifested, this will have a powerful influence in affecting the heart of the hearer. David, it appears, had enjoyed much pleasure in the conversation of Ahithophel, and was therefore exceedingly surprised and disappointed when the latter fell. " We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company," *Psa.* lv. 14.

It is with professors of religion, especially with those who become such at a time of great outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as it is with blossoms in the spring ; there are vast numbers of them on the trees, all of which look fair and promising, but yet very many of them come to nothing. Many of them soon wither and drop off, though for a

while, they looked as beautiful, and smelled as sweetly as those that remain; so that we cannot by our senses ascertain, with certainty, those blossoms which have in them the secret virtue, which will afterwards appear in the fruit. We must judge, not by the beautiful colours, and the pleasant smell of the blossom, but by the matured fruit. So young professors may appear very promising; pious persons may think they talk feelingly, may relish their conversation, and imagine that they perceive in it a divine savour; and yet all their profession may prove to be nothing.

It is wonderful with what difficulty we become satisfied with the rules and directions which Christ has given us. We prefer rules of our own inventing. Christ has directed us to judge of the tree chiefly by its fruit; but this we deem insufficient; other criterions must be devised, supposed to be more distinguishing and certain. This presumption has been followed by consequences of the most baneful description. In this respect, many of the saints, I have no doubt, have wandered far out of their way; and, in order that they might be brought back, some of them have been severely chastised. But many things which have lately appeared ought to have convinced us, that in general those who have been most confident of their discernment, and have appeared most forward in deciding as to the real state of professors, have been hypocrites, who have known nothing of true religion themselves.

In the parable of the wheat and the tares, it is said, "When the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also;" as if the tares, as Mr. Flavel observes,* were not to be distinguished from the wheat until that time. He mentions an observation of Jerome, who remarks

* Husbandry Spiritualized, Chap. xii.

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that wheat and tares are so much alike, that until the ear begins to put forth, it is almost impossible to distingush them. Mr. Flavel then adds, "How difficult soever it is to discern the difference between wheat and tares; yet doubtless the eye of sense can much easier discriminate them, than the most quick and piercing eye of man, can discern the difference between special and common grace. For all saving graces in the saints, have their counterfeits in hypocrites; there are similar works in these, which a spiritual and a very judicious eye may easily mistake, for the saving and genuine effects of a sanctifying spirit."

I would say something in this place as to a strange notion, which some persons have adopted of late, about certainly knowing the goodness of the state of others, from their love flowing out to them in an extraordinary manner. If their love is very sensible and great, the Spirit of God, they say, must have been the author of it; and as he is an infallible Spirit, and never deceives, he must know that the person whom they love, is a child of God, and must intend that they should love him as such. But such persons might be convinced of the fallacy of their reasoning, if they would but consider, whether or not it is their duty, to love those as the children of God, of whom they have no reason to think otherwise, though he who searches their hearts knows them not to be his children. If it is their duty to love persons of this description, then not to love them is sin; and therefore the Spirit of God may undoubtedly be the author of this affection. The Spirit of God, without being a spirit of falsehood, may, in such a case, assist us in the performance of our duty.—But the uncommon degree, and special manner, in which their love is excited, are also used as an argument in favour

of this notion. They think that the Spirit of God would never be the author of such affection, if he did not know that the subjects of it were children of God.—But I would ask, is it not our duty to love in a very high degree, all those who, we have reason to believe, are the children of God, though they may not be such in reality? As we ought to love Christ to the utmost of our capacity, so it is our duty to love those who, we have reason to believe, are his members, with great affection; and therefore not to love them to such a degree, is sin. We ought to pray to God that he would by his Spirit keep us from sin, and enable us to perform our duty; and cannot he answer our prayers in this particular, without lying? If he cannot, then the Spirit of God, in some cases, is bound not to help his people to perform their duty, because, if he did, he would be a spirit of falsehood; but undoubtedly God may enable us to perform any duty.

When we are led to conclude that particular persons are his children, God may have other ends in view in causing our love to be excited towards them, than that of revealing to us the real state of such professors. If I am at a distance from home, and hear that my house is burnt, but that my family, in some extraordinary manner, have all escaped; and if every thing in the circumstances of the intelligence makes it appear very credible, in such a case it would be highly sinful, were I not to feel a very great degree of gratitude, even though the information I had received should prove without foundation. It is exceedingly manifest that error or mistake may be the occasion of a gracious exercise, and consequently, of the gracious influence of the Spirit of God: "He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and

he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks," *Rom* xiv. 6. The Apostle is here speaking of those, who through erroneous and needless scruples, avoided eating certain meats; and from hence it appears that there may be true exercises of grace, and particularly, true thankfulness, occasioned by an erroneous judgment and practice; and consequently an error may be the occasion of those holy exercises which are from the infallible Spirit of God; and if so, we cannot determine with certainty as to the degree in which the Spirit of God may produce them on such an occasion.

This notion of ascertaining the state of others by our love being excited towards them, is anti-scriptural. The sacred writings say nothing of any such mode of judging respecting the state of others, but direct us to form our opinion of them chiefly from the fruits they produce. The scriptures clearly teach, that we cannot with certainty ascertain the real state of others. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the *hidden manna*, and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it," *Rev.* ii. 17. "He *is* a Jew," who "is one inwardly; and circumcision is *that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God," *Rom.* ii. 29. That by the expression, "whose praise is not of men, but of God," the Apostle had respect to the insufficiency of men to judge concerning him, whether he was inwardly a Jew or not, is confirmed by his use of similar language in another place: "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart; and then shall every

man have praise of God," 1 *Cor.* iv. 5. The Apostle in the two verses immediately preceding says, "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self; for I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified :—he that judgeth me is the Lord." Again, the Apostle in the second chapter to the Romans, quoted above, addresses himself particularly to those who had a high opinion of their own holiness, and discernment; were confident that they knew the will of God, and approved the things which were excellent, or tried the things that differ. They were confident that they were guides of the blind, and a light to them that were in darkness, instructers of the foolish, teachers of babes. Hence they took upon themselves to judge others. See ver. 1, 17, 18, 19, 20.

How presumptuous are the notions of those persons, who imagine that they can certainly know the state of others, when that great Apostle Peter, does not venture to say more concerning Sylvanus, than that he was a faithful brother, as he *supposed!* 1 *Pet* v. 12. Sylvanus however appears to have been a very eminent minister of Christ, an Evangelist, and an intimate companion of the Apostles. See 2 *Cor.* i. 19. 1 *Thess.* i. 1. and 2 *Thess.* i. 1.

PART THIRD.

ON THE DISTINGUISHING SIGNS OF TRULY GRACIOUS AND HOLY AFFECTIONS.

I COME NOW to the SECOND thing proposed, respecting the trial of religious affections; that is, to take notice of some circumstances, wherein those affections which are spiritual and gracious, differ from those which are not. But before I proceed to those characteristics which I have in view, I would make some observations which I desire may be remembered.

Observation I. I am far from undertaking to point out such signs as shall be sufficient to enable persons to distinguish in others, with absolute certainty, true religious affections from false ones. Were I to attempt this, I should be guilty of that presumption which I have been condemning.—Though Christ has given rules, by which we may judge respecting professors, so far as is necessary in reference to social intercourse, and church communion; and though the scriptures abound with rules which may be serviceable to ministers, in advising and directing persons committed to their care, in things pertaining to their spiritual and everlasting welfare; yet it is evident, that it never was the design of God to give us rules by which we may ascertain with certainty which of our fellow professors are his, and which are not. This discernment he has reserved to himself, as his own prerogative.

Observation II. No such criterions are to be expected, as shall be sufficient to enable those saints who are low in grace, have very much departed from God, or are fallen into a carnal and unchristian frame of mind, to discern with certainty the goodness of their state. It is not agreeable to the designs of God, neither is it desirable, that such persons should know their state to be good. We have reason to bless God that he has made no provision for the attainment of such knowledge, in any other way than by a change of frame, and of conduct.

Indeed, it is not properly through any defect in the criterions given us in the scriptures, that every saint,—those who are in the worst frame, as well as others, cannot, with certainty, know the goodness of their state. For the rules are infallible, and every saint has those things in himself, which are sure marks of grace: even the weakest act of grace is such. It is through the defect of him to whom these criterions are applied, that this knowledge cannot be attained. There is a twofold defect in that saint who is very low in grace, or in a bad frame of mind, which renders it impossible for him to know that he possesses true grace, even by the best rules that can be proposed.

FIRST, a defect in the object, or in the evidence to be examined. I do not mean a ruinous deficiency, because I suppose the person of whom I am speaking to be a real saint; but a partial defect,—a very small degree of grace, which cannot be clearly perceived. We cannot clearly discern the form of those things which are very small; nor can we distinguish them one from another, though they are very different. There is, doubtless, a great difference between the body of man and the bodies of other animals; though, if we should view the

embryos of each, owing to the imperfect state of the object, it might not be possible for us to perceive that difference. As they arrived at greater perfection, distinguishing characteristics would become more evident. Another defect attending the grace of those of whom I am speaking, is its being mixed with so much depravity, which obscures or hides it. Though different objects which are before us, may possess many characteristic marks; yet, if we see them only in a thick fog, it may still be impossible for us to distinguish one from another. When true Christians are in a bad frame, guilt lies on the conscience; this produces fear and in consequence prevents the peace and joy which arise from the assurance of hope.

Secondly, there is in this case, a defect in the perceptive faculty. As the prevalence of corruption obscures the object, so it enfeebles the sight. Sin is like some distempers of the eye, which present things in different colours from those which properly belong to them. Men, in a bad frame of mind, have their spiritual perception in an unfavourable condition for distinguishing spiritual objects.

For these reasons, no criterion that can be given, will be satisfactory in such a state as this. In these circumstances, to point out characteristic marks, is like giving rules to distinguish distant objects in the dark. Many persons, in cases of this nature, waste their time in poring over past experience, and examining themselves by evidences proposed from the pulpit, or of which they read in books; when, in fact, there is other work for them to do, without which all their self-examination is in vain. The accursed thing is to be removed from their camp; Achan is to be slain, and until this is done they *must* be in darkness and trouble. It is not the

design of God that men should obtain assurance in any other way, than by mortifying depraved inclinations, and by growing in the lively exercise of grace. Though self-examination is a duty of great importance, and by no means to be neglected; yet it is not the principal means, by which the saints obtain satisfaction as to their interest in the favour of God. Assurance is not to be obtained so much by self-examination, as by active piety. The Apostle Paul sought assurance chiefly in this way;—by forgetting the things which were behind, and reaching forth unto those things which were before, pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. It was by this means chiefly that he obtained assurance: "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly," 1 *Cor.* ix. 26. Giving all diligence, by adding to faith, virtue, &c. is the direction which the Apostle Peter gives us, for "making our calling and election sure," and having an entrance ministered to us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of Christ. Without this, we shall be in spiritual darkness: unable to perceive either the pardon of our sins, as it respects the present; or our interest in the heavenly inheritance, as it respects the future. 2 *Pet.* i. 5—11.

Though good rules for distinguishing true grace from counterfeit, may tend to convince hypocrites, and be of great use to the saints in removing needless doubts; yet I am far from professing to lay down such rules, as shall be sufficient of themselves to enable all true saints to know the goodness of their state, or afford them the principal means of their satisfaction.

Observation III. Nor do the occurrences of the past, or the present times, afford much encourage-

ment in laying down rules for distinguishing between true and false affection, with a view of convincing those hypocrites, who are deceived by great, but false discoveries and affections. Such hypocrites are so confident of their own wisdom, and so blinded and hardened by self-righteousness, under the guise of humility, that to lay before them the most convincing evidence of their hypocrisy, is, in general, in vain. Their state is indeed deplorable, nearly approaching the situation of those who have committed the unpardonable sin. Such professors are apparently further from the means of conviction and repentance than other people. Still however good rules may be the means of preventing delusions of this description, and of reclaiming erroneous professors of a more favourable kind.—God is able to convince even the worst kind of hypocrites; and his grace is not to be limited, nor are means to be neglected.—And besides, such rules may be of service to the real saints, in detecting false affections, which are sometimes mixed with true ones; and in being a means of purifying their religion.

Having premised so much, I proceed directly to take notice of those circumstances by which true religious affections are distinguished from false ones.

I. Truly gracious affections are produced by a *supernatural*, *spiritual*, and *divine influence* on the mind.

I will explain what I mean by these terms. We find that real saints, or those persons who are sanctified by the Spirit of God, are, in the New Testament, called spiritual persons; and their being spiritual is spoken of, as their peculiar character, and that wherein they are distinguished from those

who are not sanctified. Those who are spiritual are set in opposition to those who are carnal, or natural, that is, in a state of nature. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual, judges all things." 1 *Cor.* ii. 14, 15. By a natural man, the scriptures mean an ungodly man. The Apostle Jude, speaking of certain ungodly men, who had crept in unawares among the saints, calls them "sensual, not having the Spirit," ver. 19. He assigns this as the reason, why they behaved themselves in so wicked a manner. The word translated sensual in this passage is ψυχικοί; which in several verses in 1 *Cor.* chap. ii. is translated natural. In like manner, in the next verse but one, spiritual men are set in opposition to carnal men; by which terms we are to understand the same as by spiritual men and natural men in the preceding verses: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you, as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal," that is, as in a great measure unsanctified. That by the term carnal, the Apostle means unsanctified, is abundantly evident from *Rom.* vii. 25. viii. 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13. *Gal.* v. 16, &c. *Col.* ii. 18. If therefore by the terms natural and carnal, in these texts, is meant unsanctified, then undoubtedly by the term spiritual, which stands opposed to them, is meant sanctified and gracious.

And as the saints are called spiritual in scripture, so there are certain properties, qualities and privileges which have the same denomination. We read of a spiritual mind, *Rom.* viii. 6. of spiritual wisdom, *Col.* i. 9. and of spiritual blessings, *Eph.* i. 3.

It may be observed, that the word spiritual, in

these and other texts of the New Testament, is not used to signify any relation to the spirit, or soul of man, in opposition to the body. Qualities are not said to be spiritual, because they have their seat in the soul; for there are some properties which the scriptures call carnal, which have their seat as much in the soul, as those properties which are called spiritual. This is the case with pride, and self-righteousness, and confidence in our own wisdom, which the Apostle calls fleshly, *Col.* ii 18.

Nor are qualities, &c. denominated spiritual because they relate to things which are immaterial. The heathen philosophers were accustomed to speculate about spirits, and immaterial beings. Notwithstanding this, the Apostle represents them as carnal men, totally ignorant of those things which are spiritual, 1 *Cor.* chap. ii. But it is in relation to the Spirit of God, that persons and qualities are termed spiritual in the New Testament. The word Spirit, as used to signify the third person in the Trinity, is the substantive, from which is formed the adjective spiritual, in the Holy Scriptures. Christians therefore are denominated spiritual, because they are born of the Spirit of God, and because they are under the gracious influence of that Spirit Things are also called spiritual as they stand related to the Spirit of God: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," 1 *Cor.* ii. 13, 14 Again, "To be carnally minded, *is* death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace," *Rom.* viii. 6. In the 9th verse, the Apostle explains what he means by the terms carnally, and spiritually minded. He shows that by the latter, he means our being

under the gracious influence of the Spirit of God: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you" Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." That this is the meaning of the Apostle is evident from the whole of the context

But it must be observed here, that, although it is with relation to the Spirit of God, and his influence, that persons and things are, in the New Testament, called spiritual; yet all persons who are under any kind of influence of the Holy Spirit, are not called spiritual The extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, are sometimes called spiritual; yet natural men, whatever gifts of the Spirit they possessed, are not in general, in the New Testament, called spiritual. For it is not from having the gifts, but the graces of the Spirit, that we are called spiritual: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye" who "are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness," *Gal.* vi. 1. Meekness is one of those virtues of which the Apostle had been speaking, in showing what the fruits of the Spirit are In the language of the New Testament, those properties, or qualities, are said to be spiritual, which are truly gracious and holy, and peculiar to the saints: "We desire that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," *Col.* i. 9. By the terms wisdom, and spiritual understanding, in this passage, is intended, that wisdom which is gracious, and from the sanctifying influence of the Spirit of God. Spiritual wisdom is opposed to natural wisdom; as the spiritual man is opposed to the natural man; and therefore spiritual wisdom is the same as that wisdom which is from above, *Jam.* iii. 17. This the Apostle opposes to natural wisdom;—a wisdom which descendeth not from

above, but is earthly, sensual, and devilish, ver. 15. In this passage the word translated sensual, is, in the original, the same as that which is translated natural in 1 *Cor.* ii. 14.

So that though natural men may be the subjects of a certain kind of divine influence, as is evident from many parts of scripture, particularly from *Num.* xxiv. 2 — 1 *Sam.* x. 10.—xi. 6.—xvi. 14.—1 *Cor* xiii. 1, 2, 3.—*Heb* vi. 4, 5, 6. &c. yet they are not, in the sense of scripture, spiritual persons; neither are any of those effects, gifts, qualities, or affections, which they derive from the influence of the Spirit of God, called spiritual.—The great difference lies in the two following particulars:

1. The Spirit of God is given to the saints to dwell in them, as his proper and continued abode; to animate and influence their minds as a principle of life and action. The scriptures represent the Holy Spirit as not only occasionally influencing the saints, but as abiding in them, as his temple, and everlasting dwelling place, 1 *Cor.* iii. 16.—2 *Cor.* vi 16.—*John* xiv. 16, 17. He is represented as being so united to the faculties of the soul, as to become the principle of a new nature and life. He is a fountain and well of water in the soul, springing up into spiritual and everlasting life, *John* iv. 14. This living water, the evangelist himself explains as intending the Spirit of God, vii 38, 39. The Spirit of God being thus communicated, and united to the saints, they are from thence properly denominated spiritual.

On the other hand, though the Spirit of God may influence natural men, yet, as he is not communicated to them, as an indwelling principle, they do not derive any denomination or character from that circumstance.

2. Another, and the principal reason why the saints, and their virtues are called spiritual, is this; the Spirit of God, dwelling in them as a vital principle, produces those effects which correspond with his own nature. Holiness is the nature of the Spirit of God, therefore he is called in the scriptures the Holy Spirit. Holiness, which is the beauty of the Divine Being, is as much the proper nature of the Holy Spirit, as heat is the nature of fire. The grace which is in the hearts of the saints, though infinitely less, is of the same nature as the divine holiness. "That which is born of the Spirit," says the Redeemer, "is spirit," *John* iii 6. The principle which is produced in the minds of the saints, is of the same nature as that Spirit, and so is properly called spiritual.

But the Spirit of God never influences the minds of natural men in this way. He never communicates himself to them in his own proper nature. He never indeed acts contrary to his nature, either on the minds of saints or of sinners; but his influence may be agreeable to his nature, where there is no communication of that nature.

The relation of the Spirit to the subjects of his operation, is not only different, from every thing that can be experienced by an unregenerate man, but the operation itself is different, and its effects exceedingly so. The saints are not only called spiritual, as having the Spirit dwelling in them; but the effects of divine influence upon their minds, are also spiritual, and therefore cannot be experienced by an unregenerate man. This is a spiritual work in the highest sense of the word; and is therefore, above all other works, peculiar to the Spirit of God. There is no other work so excellent as this; for there is none in which God *so* communicates himself, and in which the creature has, in so high a

sense, a participation of God, as in this. Hence the saints are represented as "being made partakers of the divine nature," as being "the temples of the living God," 2 *Pet.* i. 4. & 2 *Cor.* vi. 16. See also 1 *John* iii. 24. iv. 12, 15, 16. *John* xvii. 21,23,26. *Rom.* viii. 10. *Heb* xii. 10. 1 *John* i. 3. Not that the saints are made partakers of the essence of God, according to the blasphemous notions and language of some heretics; but, to use a scripture phrase, they are made partakers of his *fulness*, that is, of his moral beauty. Grace in the hearts of the saints, being therefore that work of God in which he communicates the holiness of his nature. it is doubtless his peculiar work, and in an eminent degree above the power of any creature. The influence of the Spirit of God, thus communicating himself and making the creature a partaker of the divine nature, is what I mean by truly gracious affections arising from spiritual and divine influence.

None but real saints possess that experience which is truly spiritual. Others not only possess not those communications of the Spirit of God in so high a degree as the saints, but they possess nothing of the same nature and kind. The Apostle James tells us, that natural men have not the Spirit; and Christ urges the necessity of a new birth, or a being born of the Spirit, because he that is born of the flesh, is flesh, *John* iii. 6. The unregenerate have not the Spirit of God dwelling in them, in any degree; for the Apostle declares, that all who have the Spirit of God dwelling in them, are sons of God, *Rom.* viii. 9—11. Having the Spirit of God is mentioned as the earnest of the everlasting inheritance, 2 *Cor.* i. 22. & v 5. *Eph.* i. 13, 14. It is a sure evidence of our being in Christ: "Hereby we know that we dwell in him,

and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit," 1 *John* iv. 13.—Ungodly men are not partakers of the divine nature, for partaking of the divine nature is mentioned as the peculiar privilege of real saints, 1 *Pet.* i. 4. They are not partakers of the holiness of God, *Heb.* xii. 10. A natural man has no experience of any thing spiritual, for the Apostle assures us that he is a perfect stranger to every thing of this kind: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned," 1 *Cor.* ii. 14. To the same purpose, the Lord Jesus Christ tells us, that the world is wholly unacquainted with the Spirit of God: "*Even* the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him." *John* xiv. 17. It is farther evident that unregenerate men possess nothing of the nature of real grace; for the Apostle declares, that those of them who proceed farthest in religion, have no charity, or true Christian love, 1 *Cor.* xiii. So Christ reproves the Pharisees, those high pretenders to religion, for not having the love of God in them, *John* v. 42. Hence natural men have no communion or fellowship with Christ, for this is mentioned as the peculiar privilege of the saints, 1 *John* i. 3, 6, 7. 1 *Cor.* i. 9. The scriptures speak of a gracious principle in the soul, though small as a grain of mustard seed, as inconsistent with a state of sin, 1 *John* iii. 9. *Matt.* x. iii. 31. Natural men are represented in the sacred writings, as having no spiritual light, no spiritual life, no spiritual being; and therefore regeneration is often compared to the opening of the eyes of the blind, to the raising of the dead, and to the work of creation.

From these things it is evident, that those gra-

cious influences of which the saints are the subjects, and which are the effects of the Spirit of God, are altogether supernatural,—are quite different from any thing that unregenerate men experience. They are what no improvement, or composition of natural qualifications or principles will ever produce; because they not only differ from what is natural, and from every thing that natural men experience, in degree and circumstances, but also in kind; and are of a nature far more excellent. And this is what I mean by supernatural, when I say, that gracious affections proceed from supernatural influence.

From hence it follows, that in gracious affections, there are new perceptions and sensations, entirely different in their nature and kind, from any thing experienced by the saints before. For if God, by his gracious influence, produces something that is new, not only in degree and circumstances, but in the whole of its nature, and that which could be produced by no exaltation or composition of what was possessed before, or by the addition of any thing of the same kind;—if God produces something thus new in the mind; then doubtless something entirely new is felt, or perceived, or thought; or, which is the same thing, there is some perception or sensation of the mind, of an entirely new description.

This new spiritual sense, and the new dispositions which attend it, are not however new faculties, but new principles. By a principle, I mean that foundation which is laid for any particular kind of exercise of the faculties of the soul. So that this new spiritual sense, is not a new faculty of the understanding, but a foundation laid in the soul for a new kind of exercise of that faculty.

The Spirit of God, in all his operations upon the

minds of natural men, only moves, impresses, assists, improves, or in some other way acts upon natural principles. He may greatly assist natural men in their reasonings about secular things, and even about the doctrines of religion, without giving any new principle or disposition In those convictions which they sometimes experience, the Spirit of God only assists conscience to perform that work more fully, which it performs naturally. There are many other ways in which the Holy Spirit acts upon, assists and moves natural principles, where there is nothing supernatural and divine. But the Spirit of God, in his gracious influence, operates by infusing, or exercising, new supernatural principles; —principles vastly more important and excellent, than any thing experienced or possessed by natural men.

From what has been said, it follows, that all spiritual and gracious affections arise from, and are attended by some apprehension, idea, or sensation of mind, exceedingly different from all that can be possessed, or experienced by natural men;—something of which they can form no adequate conception.

But here two things must be noticed, in order that this may be rightly understood.

1. On the one hand, it must be observed, that not every thing belonging to spiritual affections, is new and entirely different from what natural men may conceive of, and experience. Many circumstances, appendages, and effects are common to both natural and spiritual affections. Thus love to a near relation and love to God, have many attending circumstances exactly similar: love to God produces a desire to please the object beloved; so does love to a near relation: love to God causes a man to delight in thinking of God, and in con-

formity to the will of God; exactly similar are the effects of that love which one man may bear to another. But yet the conceptions which the saints have of the loveliness of God, and that kind of delight in him which they experience, are quite peculiar, and entirely different from any thing which a natural man can possess, or of which he can form any proper notion. And even in these circumstances which seem to be common, there is something peculiar: both spiritual and natural love produce desires after the object beloved; but they are not the same kind of desires: there is a sensation of soul in spiritual desires, which is very different from all natural desires. Both spiritual and natural love, are attended by delight in the object beloved; but the sensations of delight are not the same, but exceedingly different. Natural men may have conceptions of many things about spiritual affections; but still there is something in them of which they can form no proper notion.

2 On the other hand, a natural man may have religious apprehensions and affections, which, in many respects, are quite new to him; and yet what he experiences may not be the exercise of a new principle, nor the sensations of a new spiritual apprehension. His affections may be quite new, through the influence of natural principles, arising from some powerful influence of Satan, or some kind of strong delusion.

Upon the whole, I think it clearly evident, that all truly gracious affections arise from the special and peculiar influences of the Holy Spirit; producing those sensible effects in the souls of the saints, which are entirely different from all that a natural man can possibly experience, not only in degree and circumstances, but in the whole of their nature. A natural man not only cannot ex-

perience that which is exactly the same, but he cannot experience any thing but what is exceedingly different, and immensely inferior.

I have insisted largely on this matter, because it is of great importance, in order to discover, and exhibit the delusions of Satan, in various kinds of false religious affections, by which many persons are deluded; and in order to determine, and settle many points of doctrine, respecting the operations of the Spirit of God, and the nature of true grace.

I therefore now come to apply these things to the purpose of this discourse.

From hence it appears, that the impressions which are made on the imaginations of some persons, or the conceptions which they have of God, of heaven, and of other things belonging to religion, possess nothing truly spiritual, or of the nature of real grace. Though what is spiritual may attend such impressions, and be mixed with them; yet in themselves they possess nothing that is spiritual, nor are they any part of gracious experience.

Many persons who have had powerful impressions upon the imagination, have very ignorantly supposed them to be of the nature of spiritual discoveries. They have had lively ideas of some well proportioned figure, or beautiful form of countenance; and this they call a spiritual sight of Christ. Some have had impressed upon their minds, the idea of a great light; and this they call a spiritual view of the glory of God. Some have been impressed with an idea of Christ hanging on the cross, and of his blood flowing from his wounds; and this they call a spiritual sight of Christ, and of the way of salvation. Some have imagined that they saw him with his arms extended, ready to embrace them; and this they call a spiritual discovery of the sufficiency of his grace, and a certain proof that he loves them.

Some have had lively ideas of heaven, and of Christ on his throne there, surrounded by saints and angels; and this they call a spiritual view of heaven.—And in like manner, the imaginations of some persons have been impressed with ideas of hearing. They have imagined that Christ was speaking to them in the language of comfort and encouragement. These things they have denominated the inward call of Christ,—having the witness of the Spirit,—a testimony of the favour of God, &c.

Persons of little information, and who are not accustomed to reflect, more readily conclude that these things are spiritual, because spiritual things, being invisible, we are obliged to use figurative expressions in speaking of them. Thus we call a clear apprehension of spiritual things by the name of light; and the conviction of the judgment, and the determination of the will, when produced by the word and Spirit of God, we denominate spiritually hearing the call of Christ. Some persons, upon hearing these expressions often used,—and having the necessity of their eyes being opened,—of their having a discovery of spiritual things, &c. urged upon them, ignorantly expect some such discoveries and views as have been spoken of; and when these are obtained, they are confident that their eyes are now opened,—that Christ has now manifested himself to them as their Saviour; and hence they are exceedingly affected by their supposed deliverance and privileges, and in consequence of which, different affections are immediately and powerfully excited.

But it is very evident that such discoveries have nothing in them really spiritual and divine: they are in no respect of such a kind as to be entirely, and in the whole of their nature, different from all that natural men can possibly experience; so that

in order to possess them, we must have a new spiritual and divine principle communicated A natural man is as capable of having a lively idea of shapes, and colours. and sounds, in reference to absent objects, impressed upon his mind, as a regenerate man. And it is ascertained by abundant experience, that it is not from mental cultivation that persons are rendered more liable to such lively ideas; but that, on the contrary, the weakness of the body, and of the mind, conduces very much to this susceptibility.

These ideas, though the manner in which they are impressed is sometimes extraordinary, are no better on that account: they are still not of a different kind from what men obtain by their senses. For instance, the conceptions which an unregenerate man has of Christ hanging on the cross, and shedding his blood, is no better in itself, than the conceptions which the Jews, his enemies had, who stood round his cross, and witnessed his crucifixion. Yea, if men should actually receive such ideas by the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit, unaccompanied by a gracious change of disposition, they would not be spiritual,—they would be nothing more than the common work of the Spirit of God. Balaam had impressed on his mind, by divine influence, a clear and lively representation, or idea of Jesus Christ, as the star rising out of Jacob, when he heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High, and saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, *Numb.* xxiv. 16, 17. Notwithstanding this, he had no spiritual discovery of Christ,—that Day-star never spiritually arose in his heart.

And as these ideas have nothing spiritual in their nature;—nothing but what natural men, without any new principles, are capable of; so there is

nothing in their nature which requires that gracious influence of the Spirit of God, which is necessary to the production of true grace. There appears nothing in them above the power of Satan. The devil can no doubt suggest ideas, otherwise he could not tempt men to sin. They may be raised merely by impressions made on the body, by moving the animal spirits, and impressing the brain. Experience abundantly shows that alterations in the body, will certainly excite ideas in the mind.

But it is also evident that the devil not only can, but that he often has excited such ideas. This appears from the dreams and visions of the false prophets of old, who were under the influence of lying spirits. See *Deut.* xiii. 1. 1 Kings, xxii. 22. *Isa.* xxvii. 7. *Ezek.* xiii 7. *Zech.* xiii. 4. He excited ideas in the minds of the heathen priests, magicians and sorcerers in their visions and ecstasies; and in the mind of Jesus Christ himself, when he showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, as those kingdoms could not be in sight.

And if Satan, or any created being has power to impress the mind with ideal representations, then no particular kind of such representations can be any evidence of a divine and gracious influence, for no higher kind of power is required to form in the brain one shape or colour, than another. It is evident therefore, that if it is in the power of the devil to produce any kind of impression on the imagination, he may produce all kinds.

From hence it also appears, that nothing of this kind is spiritual and divine, in the sense in which it has been proved that all gracious experience is. And though, in some degree, such ideas attend gracious experience, yet they are no part of that experience. Owing to our infirmities in the pre-

sent state, and especially to the weak constitution of some persons, gracious affections, when very strong, undoubtedly excite lively ideas in the imagination; yet it is also true, that when affections arise wholly from imagination, which is often the case, they are merely natural,—they are built on a foundation which is not spiritual, and so are entirely different from gracious affections.

These impressions on the imagination often raise the carnal affections of men to a very great height; and no wonder, as the persons thus deluded are firmly persuaded of their being divine manifestations which the great JEHOVAH makes to their souls; thus giving testimony, in an extraordinary manner, as to their special interest in his gracious favour.

Again, it is evident from what has been said, respecting gracious operations on the heart of man, that the act of impressing the words of scripture on the mind, has nothing in it spiritual and divine.—I have had occasion to say something of this already; and if the reader bears in mind what has been advanced, concerning the nature of spiritual influence, it will be abundantly evident to him, that this is not a spiritual and gracious operation. For I suppose that no person of common understanding, will say or imagine, that there are words which cannot be impressed upon the mind of a natural man.

Suggesting the words of scripture to the mind, is only exciting ideas of certain sounds or letters; and therefore, from what has been already said, it is evident, that in such suggestions there may be nothing spiritual. But let it be well observed, that when the extraordinary manner in which the words of scripture are suggested to the mind, is

that which excites our warm affections, and is properly the ground of them, then those affections are certainly not spiritual. Persons may have gracious affections attending scripture passages, thus brought to their minds, and the Spirit of God may make use of scripture to excite them. In this case, it is the divine and excellent things contained in those scriptures, which excite their affections, and not the extraordinary and sudden manner in which they are suggested. Such persons are affected by the instruction they receive from the words, and the view of the glorious things of God which they exhibit; and not by their coming suddenly to their minds, as though they had been spoken to them. Persons are often exceedingly affected in this way; the words of some great and precious promise of scripture, come suddenly to their minds, and they regard them as directed immediately to them from the Holy Spirit himself. This they take to be the voice of God, revealing to them their happy circumstances. There is no spiritual knowledge as to the meaning of these passages, preceding their engaged affections, as the foundation of them: all the knowledge they have as the foundation of these affections, is this, the words they think were spoken to them, because they came so suddenly, and in so extraordinary a manner. And their supposed religious affections are built wholly on the sand, and rest on a conclusion for which they have no foundation; for as it has been already shown, the sudden manner in which words are suggested to the mind, is no evidence that the suggestion is from God. And if God did really suggest words to our minds, and we knew that he did so, *that* would not be spiritual knowledge. Balaam might know that the words which were

suggested to him, were suggested by God; yet he possessed no spiritual and gracious illumination. Persons who have their affections thus raised, if they should be inquired of, whether they have any clearer views of the excellency of the things contained in those scriptures, would probably say, Yes, without hesitation; though they have no such views, except in the following respect:—when they have adopted the notion that the words are spoken immediately to themselves,—that circumstance makes those passages appear precious to them, and in consequence, they regard what those scriptures say to them, as being excellent and highly important. For instance, suppose these words were suddenly brought to their minds, "Fear not,—it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Having adopted a confident persuasion, that the words are spoken to them immediately; that God is their Father, and hath given to them the kingdom of heaven; they are greatly affected, and this passage becomes precious to them. But the reason why this promise appears so important to them, is merely because they think it is made to *themselves immediately*. All the impression they have of any glory in it, arises from self love, and from their imagined interest in what is promised. They have no view of the holy nature of the kingdom of heaven, the spiritual glory of God, and his abundant grace to sinners in giving them this kingdom. On the contrary, they first imagine that they are interested, and then they are highly affected, and afterwards they regard these things as excellent and precious. So that the sudden and extraordinary manner in which passages of scripture come to their minds, is evidently the foundation of the whole; and this is a clear proof

of the wretched delusion by which they are deceived.

The first religious comforts of many persons, and what they call their conversion, is of the same kind. After conviction and terrors, some encouraging promise is suddenly, and unaccountably suggested to their minds; and the manner in which it is suggested, leads them to conclude, that it certainly proceeds from God This is the fonndation of their faith, and bope, and comfort. From hence they take their first encouragement to trust in God. But every person, tolerably acquainted with the principles of religion. must know, that God reveals his love to men, and their interest in his promises, *after*, and not *before* they believe. They must believe, before they can realize an interest in the promises. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of truth, and therefore he does not suggest scripture to the minds of men, in order to reveal to them that they have an interest in the favour of God, and his promises, when they have none, not having yet believed.—No promise of the covenant of grace belongs to any man, until he has believeth in Christ; for it is only by faith that we become interested in Christ, and in the promises of the new covenant; and therefore whatever spirit applies the promises of that covenant to a person who does not believe, must be a lying spirit; and the faith which is built upon such an application, has in fact no scripture foundation to rest upon. The Spirit of God does not suggest comfortable texts of scripture in order to assure us of his love, while we have not the faith of dependence. And even if a promise is properly applied as an invitation; yet if we make the sudden and unusual manner of its being suggested, the ground on which we believe that we are invited,

our persuasion is not true faith, because it is built on that which is not the ground of true faith. The only reason we have to infer that we are invited to partake of the blessings of the gospel, is this, the word of God declares, that persons qualified as we are, are invited, and God, who makes the declaration, cannot lie. If a sinner, feeling that he is such, is convinced of the veracity of God, and that the scriptures are his word, he will need nothing more to satisfy him that he is invited; for they abound with invitations to sinners, even to the chief of sinners, to come and partake of the benefits of the gospel. Possessing such views and feelings, he will want no new revelation.

As the religious comfort of many professors, at the time of their supposed conversion, springs from those sources which have been mentioned; so do their hopes, and joys, and other affections, at subsequent stages of their experience. They have often particular words of scripture,—gracious declarations and promises, suggested to their minds, which in consequence of the manner in which they are suggested, they conclude are immediately sent from God. This circumstance, they actually make the chief ground of the confidence and comfort they receive from them. They imagine a kind of conversation, carried on between God and themselves; and the scriptures which come to their minds, are that by which he speaks to them, satisfies their doubts, promises them support, and reveals to them clearly their interest in everlasting blessings. And thus they are often elevated, and have a kind of sudden and tumultuous joy, mingled with strong confidence, and a high opinion of themselves; when indeed the main ground of this confidence, and this joy, is not any thing contained in

the scriptures, or taught by them, but the *suddenness* with which particular passages are suggested to their minds There is no particular promise in the word of God, spoken to any individual saint, or made his in any other way, than as all the promises of the covenant of grace are his, and spoken to him; though it is undoubtedly true, that some of the promises may be more adapted to his case, than to the case of others; and God, by his Spirit, may enable him more fully to understand some than others; and may give him a deeper sense of the preciousness, and suitableness of the blessings contained in them.

But is there no such thing then as a particular, spiritual application of the promises of scripture by the Spirit of God? I answer, there undoubtedly is; but it is also certain that the nature of it is wholly misunderstood by many persons, so that they deceive themselves, and give Satan great advantage against them, and against the interests of religion. The spiritual application of a scripture promise, does not consist in its being immediately suggested to the mind, accompanied by a very strong persuasion that it is spoken particularly to the individual himself, in reference to his own state. There is no evidence of the hand of God in any thing of this kind, as events have shown, with respect to many professors. There is nothing in this at all beyond the power of Satan; nor any thing implying a vital communication from God. A truly spiritual application of the word of God, is of a vastly superior nature; as much above the power of the devil, as it is to apply the word of God to a dead man, so as to raise him to life. A spiritual application of the word of God consists in applying it to the mind in its enlightening, sanctifying influence. It consists in enlightening the understanding to see the holy

excellency of the blessings promised, and the faithfulness of him who promises; thus inducing the mind to embrace the blessings promised, and to adore the promiser; and by this means producing the sensible operations of grace, and the evidence of interest in the blessings promised. An application not consisting in these things, but only in certain words borne into the mind in a direct way, as if spoken; making persons believe, on this foundation alone, that the promise is theirs, is a delusive application, performed by the spirit of darkness, and not by the Spirit of light.

When persons have their affections thus raised, it is not any thing contained in the scriptures which raises them, but only the *unusual manner* in which the words are suggested. Hence a proposition is assumed, which is not contained in any part of the Bible, that is, that their sins are forgiven, or that it is the good pleasure of God to give to them, in particular, the kingdom of heaven, &c. There are propositions in the Bible declaring that persons of a particular description are forgiven and beloved of God; but there are none declaring that particular persons, independent of any previous work of grace upon the mind, are forgiven and beloved of God; and therefore, when any person is affected, and comforted by such a proposition, it is not by any word of God contained in the Bible.

Again, it appears from what has been said, that no revelation by immediate suggestion, is spiritual or divine, in that sense wherein gracious operations and effects are so.

There is nothing in the nature of the perceptions or ideas thus excited in the mind at all above the ideas of natural men; though the manner in which they are excited is extraordinary. In those operations upon the human mind, which are spiritual

and gracious, as I have already shown, not only is the manner of performing them extraordinary, but the work itself is extraordinary, and very far above all that can be experienced by an unsanctified mind. And as to the production of ideas by immediate suggestion, there is nothing in this operation, but what the minds of natural men, continuing in a state of nature, are capable of; as is manifested in the case of Balaam, and others mentioned in the scriptures.

Even if these suggestions are attended by texts of scripture, immediately, and in an extraordinary manner, impressed upon the mind, it does not follow from thence that the operation is spiritual and divine. The suggestion of words from the scriptures is no more divine, than the suggestion of any other words.

Hence it follows, that those affections which are founded on such immediate suggestions, or supposed suggestions, are not gracious affections They may, indeed, be the occasion, or accidental cause of gracious affections; but they are never properly the foundation of them; for gracious affections are always the consequences of a supernatural and divine influence. But there are many, even high religious affections, which have such suggestions or revelations for their sole foundation, and they are regarded as spiritual discoveries. This is a gross delusion.

Here it may be proper to observe, that what is often called the witness of the Spirit, has nothing in it spiritual and divine; and consequently the affections built upon it are false and delusive. That which many persons call the witness of the Spirit, is nothing more than an immediate suggestion, by which they are assured of their being converted, or made the children of God, and from which they de-

rive the persuasion that their sins are pardoned, and that God has given them a title to heaven. This assurance requires no higher kind of suggestion, in order to impress it on the mind, than that by which the mind of Balaam was impressed. It requires no higher kind of agency for a man to have the persuasion of his own conversion impressed upon his mind, than to have the persuasion of his neighbour's conversion impressed upon his mind; and God, if he pleased, could impart this knowledge, as well as any other, without any communication of his holiness. The importance of the subject does not at all prevent the mind of a natural man from being susceptible of an immediate suggestion or impression concerning it. Balaam had facts as important as this impressed upon his mind, without any gracious influence; particularly the coming of Christ, the setting up of his kingdom, and the blessedness of the spiritual Israel. Abimelech, king of the Philistines, had the special favour of God to Abraham revealed to him, *Gen.* xx. 6. See *Gen.* xxxi. 24, and *Psa.* cv. 14, 15. If a truly good man should have an immediate revelation or suggestion from the Holy Spirit, concerning the favour of God to his neighbour or to himself; it would be no more than a kind of common influence of the Spirit of God, as all revelations by immediate suggestion are. See 1 *Cor.* xiii. 2. And though it is not possible that a natural man should have it suggested to him by the Spirit of God that he is converted, yet that impossibility does not arise from the nature of the influence required in such a suggestion, but from the veracity of God: he cannot lie. The influence which immediately produces this persuasion, when well founded, is not at all different from that which immediately produces any other persuasion; and so

the kind and nature of the influence, is not above what is common both to bad and to good men.

But it is a low notion of the witness of the Spirit to suppose, that there is nothing in the nature of that influence by which it is imparted, but what may be experienced by natural men, or of which men are capable, who are at the same time altogether unsanctified; and that therefore the gift itself possesses nothing of the holy nature of the Spirit of God, nothing of a vital communication of that Spirit. That which is called the witness of the Spirit, in *Rom* viii. 15, 16, is called the seal of the Spirit in 2 *Cor.* i. 22. *Eph* i. 13, and iv. 30, in allusion to the seal of princes, annexed as a token of special regard to certain instruments, by which they advance their favourites to some high honour, or peculiar privilege. Thus the sealing of his favourites by the Prince of princes, is far from being a common operation: there is no work of the Spirit of God whatever, which, in its nature, is more holy, peculiar, inimitable, and characteristic of divinity. The seal of the King of heaven, stamped on the heart, is in its very nature a holy communication, and not merely the revelation of an important fact. The seal of the Spirit is a work of God on the heart, of which natural men are so far from being the subjects, that they can form no conception of it. "To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it." *Rev.* ii. 17. There is reason to suppose that what is here spoken of, is the same mark, evidence, or blessed token of special favour, which is elsewhere called the seal of the Spirit.

What has misled many persons in their notions of that influence of the Spirit of God, of which we

are speaking, is the word WITNESS. This blessing has been regarded, not as a holy effect, or work of the Spirit upon the human heart, from whence we may argue that we are the children of God; but as an immediate, inward suggestion, as though God by a kind of voice or impression, informed us that we were his children. This mistake arises from not observing the sense in which the word witness, or testimony, is often used in the New Testament. These terms, as used in the places alluded to, do not signify a direct declaration, or assertion as to the truth of any proposition, but that evidence, or those premises from whence the truth of such proposition may be inferred. God is said to "bear witness with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost," *Heb.* ii. 4.—Now these miracles are not denominated witnesses, because they are of the nature of assertions, or direct testimony, but as they afford evidence or rational ground for indubitable inference. "Long time therefore abode they, speaking boldly in the Lord," who "gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands," *Acts*, xiv. 3. "But I have greater witness that *that* of John, for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me," *John*, v. 36. "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me," *John* x. 25. In the same sense the works of divine Providence, as the giving of rain, and fruitful seasons, are mentioned as proofs of the being and goodness of God. And when the sacred writings speak of the seal of the Spirit, the expression properly denotes, not an immediate suggestion or voice, but some work or effect of the Spirit, which leaves a divine mark upon the soul, as an evidence by

which the children of God may be known. When God puts his seal upon a man's soul, there is some holy stamp,—some image impressed and left there like the impress of the seal upon the wax. And this holy stamp, or impressed image, exhibiting clear evidence to the mind that the subject of it is a child of God, is what the scriptures call the seal, the witness or evidence of the Spirit This image stamped by the Spirit on the hearts of the children of God, is his own image; and is the evidence by which they are known to be his children. Seals had anciently engraven on them two things, the *image* and the *name* of the person to whom they belonged. And therefore when Christ says to his spouse, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm;" it is as much as to say, let my *name* and my *image* remain impressed there. The seal of princes bore their image; so that what they set their seal upon, had, of course, their image. It was the custom of princes to have their image engraven on their jewels and precious stones; and the image of Augustine engraven on a precious stone, was used as the seal of the Roman Empire in the time of Christ and his Apostles. The saints are the jewels of Jesus Christ, the supreme Potentate; and these jewels have his image stamped upon them by his royal signet, the Holy Spirit. And this is undoubtedly what the scriptures mean by the seal of the Spirit; especially when it is stamped in so clear a manner, as to be evident to the eye of conscience. This is truly a supernatural, spiritual and divine work. It is a communication of the divine nature and moral beauty. No natural man is the subject of that kind of influence of the Spirit, which leaves this stamp upon the heart: he never possesses any thing of the same nature. This is the high-

est kind of witness of the Spirit, of which it is possible the soul can be the subject. The devil cannot imitate this kind of witness. As to inward suggestions of the Spirit of God, he can produce that which is so extremely like them, that it would be impossible immediately to perceive the difference

Another proof that the seal or witness of the Spirit is not a revelation by immediate suggestion, but divine grace communicated to the soul, *is*, that this seal is called the "earnest of the Spirit." "Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts," 2 *Cor.* i. 22. "In whom, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory," *Eph.* i. 13, 14. Now the earnest is part of the purchase money given in hand, to insure the payment of the whole: a part of the inheritance given to insure the possession of the whole at some future period. But surely that communication which is of the nature of eternal felicity, must be the most excellent kind of communication,—something that is in its own nature spiritual, holy and divine; and therefore far above any thing of the nature of inspiration, or revelation by the suggestions of the Spirit of God. What is the earnest or beginning of glory, but grace, especially in its more lively and manifest exercises? It is not prophecy, nor tongues, nor knowledge, but that more excellent, divine gift, "charity," or love, "that never faileth," a prelibation of the light and blessedness of heaven,—that world of love. Grace is the seed of glory in the heart, and therefore the earnest of the future inheritance. What is the beginning of eternal life in the soul, but spiritual life? and what is

spiritual life but grace? The inheritance that Christ has purchased for his people, is the Spirit of God; not in any extraordinary gifts, but in his vital indwelling in the heart, communicating and exerting himself there in his own proper, holy and divine nature. It is through the vital communications and indwelling of the Spirit, that the saints have all their life, light, holiness, beauty and joy in heaven; and it is through the same communications and indwelling, that the saints have all their life, light, holiness, beauty and comfort on earth. This vital indwelling of the Spirit, in its smaller communications, is the earnest of the Spirit,—the earnest of the future inheritance,—the first fruits of the Spirit, *Rom.* viii. 22. By the first fruits of the Spirit, the Apostle undoubtedly means the same vital gracious principle as that of which he speaks in the preceding part of the chapter, calling it spirit, and setting it in opposition to flesh. This earnest, or first-fruit of the Spirit, therefore, which has been shown to be the same as the seal of the Spirit, is the vital, gracious, sanctifying communication and influence of the Spirit, and not an immediate suggestion or revelation.

And indeed when the Apostle, in *Rom.* viii. 16, speaks of the Spirit bearing witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God, he sufficiently explains himself, if his words were but properly attended to. This verse is connected with the two verses immediately preceding, and forms an inference from what the Apostle had there said, as every attentive reader will easily perceive. The three verses are as follow; "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God; for ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father; the Spirit itself

beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God." What the Apostle says here, if we take it in connexion, clearly shows, that when he mentions the Spirit as giving evidence, or bearing witness that we are the children of God, he has respect to his dwelling in us, and leading us as the spirit of adoption, or as the spirit of a child, disposing us to behave towards God as to a father. This is the witness, or evidence, of which the Apostle speaks; and thus, if we are children, we have the spirit of children, or the spirit of adoption. And what is that, but the spirit of love? There are two kinds of spirits of which the Apostle speaks, the spirit of a slave, or of bondage, and that is *fear;* and the spirit of a child, or of adoption, and that is *love.* The Apostle says we have not received the spirit of bondage, or of slaves, which is a spirit of fear; but we have received the spirit of children,—the spirit of love, which naturally inclines us to approach God, and to behave towards him as children to a father. And this is the witness of the Spirit, or the evidence given us that we are the children of God. This is the obvious meaning of the Apostle; and undoubtedly he is here speaking of the same way of casting out doubts, and fears, and the spirit of bondage, as that of which the Apostle John speaks, 1 Epistle, iv. 18, that is, by the prevalence of love, or a child like spirit. The spirit of bondage works by fear: the slave fears the rod: but love cries Abba, Father. It gives us clear evidence of our union to God as his children, and so casts out fear. Hence it appears that the witness of the Spirit, of which the Apostle speaks, is not any immediate suggestion or revelation; but a gracious and holy work of the Spirit of God in the hearts of the saints, producing the dispositions and temper of children. It is a humble, childlike

affection to God, casting out fear, or the servile spirit of bondage.

This is evident from the context; the Apostle repeatedly mentions the Spirit as dwelling in the hearts of the saints, as a gracious principle, opposed to the flesh, or depraved nature. In the words which introduce this passage, he says, "For, if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the flesh, ye shall live," ver. 13. I have no doubt but that the Apostle has a particular view to the spirit of grace, or the spirit of love, in its more lively actings; for it is perfect, or strong love only, which so testifies, or so gives evidence that we are his children, as to cast out fear, and to deliver us from the spirit of bondage. The strong and lively exercises of a spirit of child like, evangelical, humble love to God, give clear evidence of our relation to God, as his children. Possessing this spirit, the saint has no need of numerous evidences, or a long train of reasoning upon them. The union between his soul and God is so strong and lively, that all doubts are removed.

The Apostle says the Spirit bears witness with our spirits. By the terms "our spirits" here, is meant our consciences: "The spirit of man *is* the candle of the Lord," *Prov.* xx. 27. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience," 2 *Cor.* i. 12. "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God," 1 *John*, iii. 21. When the Apostle Paul mentions the Spirit of God as bearing witness with our spirits, he is not to be understood as speaking of two separate, independent witnesses. It is by the latter that we receive the witness of the former: the Spirit of God gives evidence, by infusing and shedding abroad the love of God, the spirit of a child,

in the heart; and our spirits, or consciences receive and declare this evidence.

Great mischief has arisen from the false and delusive notion, that the witness of the Spirit is a kind of inward suggestion, or declaration from God, assuring us that we are beloved, pardoned, &c. and many souls, I fear, have been eternally ruined by this delusion.—I have therefore insisted the longer on this head.

I now proceed to a second characteristic of gracious affections.

II. The first objective ground of gracious affections is the TRANSCENDENTLY EXCELLENT and AMIABLE NATURE of divine things, abstractedly considered; and not any conceived relation they bear to ourselves, or to our own interest.

I do not suppose, however, that all relation to our own interest, is wholly excluded from any influence in our gracious affections. Self-interest certainly has a consequential, and succeeding influence in those affections which are spiritual and holy, as I shall endeavour to show.

It was before observed, that the affection of love is the fountain of all the other affections; and that Christian love in particular is the fountain of all gracious affections. Now the divine excellency and glory of God, of the word of God, of the works of God, &c. constitute the primary reason why a true saint loves these things; and not any supposed interest that he has in them, or any benefit that he hopes to receive from them, or any such relation to his interest, that self-love can properly be said to be the real foundation of them.

Some persons say that all love arises from self-

love, and that it is impossible in the nature of things, that any man should love God, or any other being, except as that affection springs from self-love. But this opinion arises, I suppose, from want of consideration. It is argued, that "Whoever loves God, and in consequence desires his glory, or the enjoyment of him, desires these things in order to his own happiness. But how come these things to be so agreeable to us, that we esteem it our highest happiness to glorify God, and enjoy him? Is not this the *fruit* of love? A man must first love God, or have his heart united to him, before he will esteem the cause of God as his own, and before he will desire to glorify and enjoy God, as his happiness."

That kind of affection to God, or to the Redeemer, which properly arises from self-love, cannot be a truly gracious and spiritual affection. This appears from what has been said already; for self-love is a principle entirely natural, and as much in the hearts of devils as in those of angels; and therefore nothing that is the mere result of it, can be supernatural and divine. Jesus Christ very evidently speaks of this kind of love, as what is not at all superior to the love of wicked men: "If ye love them" that "love you, what thank have you? for sinners also love those that love them," *Luke*, vi. 32. The devil himself knew that that mercenary kind of respect to God which arises from benefits received, or expected, is worthless in his sight: "Doth Job," says he, "fear God for nought? Hast thou not made an hedge about him and about his house?" &c. *Job* .i. 9, 10. Nor would God have allowed the objection to be good, in case the accusation should be found true, by permitting that the matter should be tried, and that Job should be

so dealt with, that it might appear ultimately whether his respect to God was mercenary, or not.

It is reasonable to suppose that the real foundation of love to God, is that on account of which he is lovely, or worthy to be loved. The nature of God is infinitely excellent; it is infinite beauty and glory. But how can a man truly love God, without loving him for that excellency, which is the foundation of all that is in any respect good or desirable in him? Those whose affections to God are founded on mercenary principles, reverse the order of things; they regard God only for the stream of divine goodness, where it reaches their own interests; and have no respect to that infinite excellency of his nature, which is the fountain of all loveliness, and so the foundation of all gracious affection.

Self-love may be the foundation of great affection towards God, without our perceiving any thing of the beauty and glory of the divine nature. Gratitude is one of the natural affections of the soul of man, as well as anger; and there is a gratitude which arises from self-love, very much in the same way that anger does. Anger is an affection excited against something which crosses self-love: gratitude is an affection excited by something which gratifies self-love. There may be gratitude without real love, as there may be anger without real hatred. Parents may be angry with their children, and at the same time have a strong, habitual love to them. Those wicked men, to whom Jesus Christ alludes in the sixth chapter of Luke, were possessed of the principle of gratitude: "Sinners also love those that love them." He declares the same even concerning the publicans, who were some of the most carnal and profligate of men, *Matt.* v. 46. This is a principle which

even the brutes exercise: a dog will love his master who is kind to him. We see, in numberless instances, that mere natural principles are sufficient to excite gratitude in men, for favours received; and sometimes towards those against whom, at the same time, they possess an habitual enmity. Saul was several times greatly affected with gratitude towards David, for sparing his life; and yet he remained an habitual enemy to him. And as men, from the mere principles of nature, may be thus affected towards men; so may they towards God. We have many proofs of this in the sacred writings: the children of Israel sang the praises of God at the Red Sea, though thy soon forgat his works; Naaman the Syrian was greatly affected by the miraculous cure of his leprosy, and proposed thenceforward to worship God, and him only, though he made an exception as to those circumstances which would expose his temporal interests to ruin; Nebuchadnezzar was greatly affected by the goodness of God, in restoring him to his reason and his kingdom, though it is probable he was never divinely enlightened. As gratitude is a natural principle, ingratitude is so much the more vile and heinous, because it shows a dreadful prevalence of wickedness, overpowering the better principles of human nature. It is mentioned, as proving the extreme wickedness of some of the heathen, that they were without natural affection, *Rom.* i. 31. But that ingratitude, or the want of natural affection, shews a high degree of depravity, does not prove that all gratitude and natural affection, possess the nature of true virtue, or saving grace.

1. Self-love, through the exercise of a merely natural gratitude, may, in different ways, be the foundation of a kind of love to God. A certain

description of love may arise from a false notion of God, which represents him as though he were only goodness and mercy; or as though the exercises of his goodness were necessary, and not free and sovereign.

2. Self-love may be the foundation of an affection in men towards God through insensibility of their state; and from their not knowing how dreadfully they have provoked him to anger. Having no sense of the heinousness of sin, and of its direct opposition to the holy nature of God, they form an idea of such a god as suits them, and feel a sort of love to him, when they are far from loving the true God. Our affections may be drawn towards God, through self-love, by some remarkable benefit received from him. This was the case with Naaman, Nebuchadnezzar, and with the children of Israel at the Red Sea.

3. Very high affections towards God often arise in some persons, from a persuasion of his love to them. After great distress, through the fear of hell, they suddenly obtain a notion, from some impression on their imaginations, that God loves them, and has forgiven their sins, and made them his children. This is the first thing that causes their affections to flow towards God; and from this cause, many of the attributes of God may appear lovely to them. But God is amiable in their view, only as they suppose he has forgiven them,—only as they imagine he loves them above most persons in the world, and has engaged to exercise his infinite wisdom and power in exalting them, and in doing for them just what they would have him to do. When they have fully adopted this persuasion, it is easy for them to acknowledge God as being amiable and glorious, and to admire and extol him. It is easy for them to acknowledge Christ as an

amiable person, when they are firmly persuaded that he loves them,far beyond most of their neighbours; that he loved them from eternity, that he died for them, and that they shall reign with him in everlasting glory. When this is the case with carnal men, their very depravity will make him seem lovely: pride itself will prejudice them in favour of what *they* call Christ. It is natural for proud, selfish man to call that lovely which greatly contributes to his interest, and gratifies his pride.

And as these persons begin, so they proceed. Their affections are raised from time to time; but they are primarily founded upon self-love, and a presumed interestin the favour of God. Many professors have a false notion of communion with God, as though it was carried on by sudden impulses and impressions. Such impulses they interpret as manifestations of the great love of God to them; and as proofs of their distinguished eminence above others ofmankind; and thus their false affections are often renewed. Whereas the exercises of holy love arise in a different way. We do not first know that God loves us, and then perceive that he is lovely; but we first perceive that he is lovely;—our hearts are first captivated by this view, and hence arise the exercises of our love. Self-love has to do with these affections by way of inference only. False affections begin with self. In the true saint, the excellency of God is the foundation of all the affections which follow. On the contrary, the hypocrite places himself as the foundation. Even his acknowledgments of the glory of God depend on his regard to his own interest.

Self-love may not only influence men, so as to cause them to be affected by the kindness of God to themselves individually; but also to themselves as parts of the community. Self-love is sufficient

to produce in us a concern for the interest of the nation to which we belong. The same natural principle may extend even to mankind in general. We may be affected by the blessings which mankind have received beyond the fallen angels. From this principle, we may be much affected by the wonderful love of God to mankind, in giving his Son to die for sinners, the amazing love of Christ in suffering so much, and the infinite glory which awaits a countless multitude, of which we regard ourselves as forming a part

But these things do by no means imply, that all gratitude to God is a merely natural principle, and that there is no such thing as spiritual gratitude. They imply no more, than that there is a gratitude which is merely natural; and that when persons love God only, or in the first place, for benefits received, their affection is merely the exercise of such a gratitude. There is undoubtedly a holy gratitude, differing greatly from all that natural men can possibly experience. It differs in the following respects:

Evangelical gratitude, or thankfulness to God, for his kindness to us, arises first of all from love to God for what he is in himself; whereas natural gratitude has no such foundation. Gracious affection to God for mercies received, always arises from a stock of love already in the heart, and which has been derived from a view of the divine excellency The saint having seen the glory of God, and his heart being captivated in consequence, he is easily affected by every kindness received A man who has no love to another, may yet be moved to gratitude by some extraordinary kindness, as in the case of Saul towards David; but this is not like the gratitude which we experience towards an intimate friend, for whom we

had previously entertained a very high esteem. Self-love is not, indeed, excluded from gracious gratitude: the saints love God for his kindness to them: "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications," *Psa.* cxvi. 1. But something else is included, and is in fact the foundation of these affections.

In gracious gratitude we are affected by the goodness and grace of God, not only as our own interest is concerned, but as they form a part of the beauty and glory of the divine nature. The wonderful and unparalleled grace of God, which is manifested in the work of redemption, and shines forth in the face of Jesus Christ, is infinitely glorious in itself, and appears so even to the angels: it composes a great part of the moral beauty and perfection of the nature of God. The grace of God would be glorious, whether it were exercised towards *us* or not; and the saint who is impressed with holy gratitude, views it in this light, and admires it on this account; though his interest in the unmerited kindness of God serves the more to engage his mind, to fix his attention, and to elevate his affections. Self love acts as an handmaid, being subservient to higher principles.

Some persons may perhaps be disposed to produce the following passage, as opposing what has been said above: "We love him because he first loved us," 1 *John*, iv. 19. In answer to this I would observe, that the Apostle's design in these words is to magnify the love of God to us from this circumstance, that he loved us while we had no love to him; as will be manifest to any one who compares this verse and the two following with the 9, 10, and 11 verses.

In the first place, the love of the saints to God, is the fruit of the love of God to them, as it is the

gift of that love: God gave to them a spirit of love to him, because he loved them from eternity. And in this respect the love of God to his elect, is the foundation of their love to him, as it is the foundation of their regeneration, and the whole of their salvation.

Secondly, the discoveries which God has made of his wonderful love to men, by Jesus Christ, in the exercises of that love, and the work of redemption; are the chief manifestations, which God has made of his moral perfections, and therefore compose the main objective ground of our love to him.

Thirdly, the love of God to any particular person, manifested in the work of conversion, is a striking exhibition of the moral perfections and glory of God, and a proper occasion of exciting the love and holy gratitude of that individual. That the saints, according to this explanation, love God because he first loved them, fully answers the design of the Apostle's argument, in the passage quoted above; so that no inference can be drawn from hence against a spiritual and gracious love, arising in the first place from a view of the excellency of divine things, and not from any conceived relation they bear to our own interest.

And as it is with the love of the saints, so it is with their joy and spiritual delight; those affections are not founded on any considerations of interest in divine things. They primarily consist in the delight which our minds derive, from the contemplation of the divine and holy beauty which these things possess in themselves. This is indeed the main difference between the joy of the hypocrite, and the joy of the true saint. The former rejoices in himself; self is the foundation of his joy. The latter rejoices in God. The hypocrite is pleased and delighted, in the first place, with his own

privileges, and the happiness to which he supposes he has attained, or shall attain. The saints are pleased and delighted, in the first place, with the amiable and glorious nature of the things of God. This is the spring of all their delights, and the source of all their pleasures. This delightful view of the glorious nature of divine things, is the foundation of all the joy they experience afterwards.

The real saint delights in Christ on account of his peculiar excellency. The way of salvation through him, is to the Christian a delightful way, because of its admirable manifestation of the divine perfections. The holy doctrines of the gospel, by which God is exalted, and man abased; holiness promoted and honoured, and sin discouraged and disgraced, are glorious doctrines in his view, prior to any appropriation of interest in them. The saints rejoice in their interest in Christ; but this is not the first spring of their joy. They first rejoice in God on account of his peculiar excellencies, and then they rejoice in him on account of what he is to them. They are in the first place filled with love and admiration, from a view of the excellencies of Christ, of his grace, and the way of salvation; and then they rejoice that this Saviour, with all the blessings of salvation, is theirs. That which is the saint's superstructure, is the hypocrite's foundation. When hypocrites hear the wonderful things of the gospel described, in a lively and eloquent manner, they attend with a great deal of pleasure and joy; but if their joy is examined, it will prove to have no other foundation than this—they regard these things as theirs. They delight to hear of the distinguishing love of Christ, for pride and self-love induce them to affect distinction. No wonder, if in this confidence of the goodness of their state, they feel easy, and are pleased

with this doctrine in the highest degree. Their joy is really a joy in themselves, and not in God.

The joy of hypocrites is a selfish joy, and hence it is, that in their rejoicing, they are accustomed to keep their eye upon themselves. Having received what they call spiritual discoveries, and possessing what they denominate experience, their minds are thereby fully occupied; so that they are principally elevated, not by the contemplation of the glory of God, or the excellencies of Christ, but by their own feelings or experience. They are ready to exclaim, What admirable experience is this! What a glorious discovery is this! And so they put their experience in the place of Christ, and instead of feasting their souls with what is without them, the refreshing blessings of the gospel, their eyes are turned from these things, or at least they view them only with a kind of inferior interest. They derive more comfort from their discoveries, than from Christ discovered.

The affections of hypocrites are very often maintained in the same way. They are first much affected by some impression or impulse on their imaginations, which they take to be an immediate suggestion, or testimony from God, with respect to his love to them, and their distinguished privileges; regarding this as a great discovery, they are powerfully worked upon, and hence arise high affections. And when their passions are thus influenced, they feel a persuasion that God is greatly pleased with their affections; and this affects them more, so that they are affected by their affections. And thus their affections are raised higher and higher, until they are filled with self-conceit, and a kind of fierce zeal.

As are the thoughts of those persons, such also is their conversation; for out of the abundance of

the heart the mouth speaketh. As they keep their attention fixed upon their experience and attainments, so they talk much about themselves. The true saint, under the influence of great spiritual affections, is ready, from the fulness of his heart, to speak much of God, his glorious perfections and works; of the amiableness of Christ, and the invaluable blessings of the gospel; but hypocrites, under the influence of *their* high affections, talk more of the discovery, than of what they discover; they are fluent in talking about the wonderful discoveries with which they are favoured, are confident of their interest in the love of God, and of their spiritual and everlasting safety.

A real saint, enjoying evangelical discoveries of the glory of God, is too much engaged with what he views *without* himself, to stay at that time to view himself, or his attainments. It would be a serious loss to him, to take his eye from the ravishing object of his contemplation, in order to survey his own experience; he cannot spend his time in thinking about the high attainments he has made, or what a pleasing story he will have to tell others. Nor does his pleasure at that time arise chiefly from the consideration of the safety of his state, or any thing he has in view respecting his own qualifications or circumstances; but from the divine beauty of that object which so powerfully engages his attention.

As the love and joy of hypocrites arise from self-love, so do their other affections, their sorrow for sin, their humiliations and submission, their religious desires and zeal. It is easy for nature, corrupt as it is, under the notion of our being amongst the highest favourites of Heaven, to love an imaginary god, who is suited to our depraved dispositions, to submit to him, and to be zealous

for his honour. The high affections of many professors are wholly built on the supposition of their being eminent saints. If the elevated opinion which they entertain of themselves, was removed, —if they saw but a little of the sinfulness and vileness of their hearts, their high affections would soon be destroyed. But as for truly gracious affections, they are founded upon a clear view of the perfections of God; and therefore a discovery of ourselves,—of our own deformity, and the meanness of our experience, will not destroy, but rather purify and heighten them.

III. That excellency in divine things, which is the first objective ground of gracious affections, is their MORAL *beauty*.

I will explain what I mean by the moral excellency of divine things.

It may be observed, that the word moral is not to be understood here, according to the common acceptation of the term, referring merely to an outward conformity to the moral law, and especially to the duties of the second table; or to those apparent virtues, which proceed wholly from natural principles. The moral excellency of an intelligent being, is seated in the heart or will: it is holiness of disposition. He whose will is truly right, is morally good or excellent. The holiness of God, is the same as the moral excellency of the divine nature, comprehending all his moral perfections. Holiness in man is but the image of God.

From hence, it may be easily understood, what I mean, when I say that a love to divine things, for their *moral* excellency, is the spring of all holy affections. It has been already shown, under the former head, that the first objective ground of all holy affections, is the supreme excellency of divine

things. I now proceed further, and say, that *that kind* of excellency of divine things, which is the first objective ground of all holy affections, is their MORAL *excellency*, or their HOLINESS Holy persons, in the exercise of holy affections, perform duties primarily because they are holy duties. They love God, in the first place, on account of his holiness, or moral perfections. Not that the saints, in the exercises of gracious affection, love God, only on account of his holiness; all his attributes are amiable and glorious in their view. His holiness, however, is the principal and leading object of their regard. Here it is that true love to God begins. This is the most essential and distinguishing circumstance belonging to a holy affection for God. Love to him on account of his moral perfections, necessarily produces delight in *all* his attributes. His moral perfections cannot exist without his natural perfections; for infinite holiness supposes infinite wisdom, and every attribute of God implies the existence of all the rest.

Moral excellency or holiness constitutes the real loveliness of all intelligent beings. Herein consists the loveliness of the angels, without which, with all their natural perfections, they would have no more loveliness than devils. Natural qualifications are either valuable, or otherwise, according as they are, or are not joined with moral excellencies. Without holiness, power and knowledge do not render any being more lovely, but rather more hateful; though they render it more lovely, when joined with holiness. Thus the elect angels are the more glorious for their power and knowledge, because these natural perfections are sanctified by moral qualities and dispositions. The holiness of an intelligent creature, is the glory of all his natural perfections. Holiness is in a peculiar man-

ner the glory of the divine nature. This sheds a loveliness on all his other attributes. It is the glory of the wisdom of God, that it is a holy wisdom, opposed to a wicked subtlety, or crafty deceit.

Hence it is that a view of the loveliness of God must begin here. No other attribute is truly lovely without this, and where this exists, every other attribute cannot but be lovely; and therefore it is impossible that other attributes should appear lovely, until this is seen; nor can any perfection of the divine nature be loved with true affection until this is loved. If the real loveliness of the divine perfections arises from the loveliness of the divine holiness, then real love to the other perfections of God, must arise from love to his holiness. Those who do not perceive the glory of this attribute, cannot perceive the glory of his mercy and grace; though they may be affected by them, and love them, as they have respect to their own interest; for these attributes are no part of the excellency of the divine nature, any further than as they stand connected with his holiness, or as they form a part of his moral perfections.

As the loveliness of the divine nature primarily consists in the holiness of that nature, so does the beauty of all divine things consist in their holiness. The saints are lovely, because they *are* saints, or holy ones. The moral image of God is their beauty and holiness. The Christian religion is excellent, because, above all other religions, it is a holy religion. The word of God is excellent, because it is a holy word. "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether; more to be desired *are they* than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey comb," *Psa.* xix. 9, 10. The Lord Jesus is amiable, because he is the chief among ten thousands, and

altogether lovely ; because he is the Holy One of God, *Acts*, iii. 14. All the gracious beauties of his human nature,—his meekness,—his patience,—his love to God and to man,—his condescension to the mean and vile,—his compassion to the miserable, &c. are included in his holiness. And the glory of his divine nature, of which the loveliness of his human nature is the image and reflection, also primarily consists in his holiness. The gospel is glorious, because it is a holy gospel, and a bright emanation of the holy attributes of God. The doctrines of the gospel are glorious, because they are holy doctrines, or doctrines according to godliness. The way of salvation is glorious, because it is a holy way. Heaven is glorious, because it is the Holy City, the Holy Jerusalem, *Rev.* xxi. 2, 10. —It is therefore primarily on account of this kind of excellency, that the saints love all these things.

In considering the first distinguishing characteristic of gracious affections, I observed that there is communicated to those who are regenerated, a new spiritual taste, different in the whole of its nature from any former sensation of the mind ; and that something is perceived in spiritual and divine things, by a real saint, in the exercise of this new taste, as entirely different from any thing that is perceived in them by natural men, as the taste of honey is different from the idea of it obtained through the medium of sight or feeling. Now the beauty of holiness is that in spiritual and divine things, which is perceived by this spiritual sense. The scriptures often represent the beauty of holiness as the chief object of a gracious taste: "I have meat to eat," said Jesus Christ, "that ye know not of—my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work," *John*, iv. 32, 34. I know of no part of the Holy Scriptures, in which

the nature and evidence of true godliness are delineated with so much clearness as in the cxix Psalm. The Psalmist declares his design at the commencement of the Psalm, and keeps that design in view all along to the end. The law of God, that grand expression of the holiness of the divine nature, is every where represented as the food and entertainment,—the great object of the love and rejoicing of the gracious soul.

A holy love has a holy object. The holiness of love, is the love of that which is holy, on account of its holiness; so that the holiness of the object is the quality on which it fixes and terminates. A holy nature *must* love that in divine things chiefly, which is most agreeable to itself; and that in divine things, which above all others is agreeable to a holy nature, is holiness.

Again, a holy nature undoubtedly loves holy things on account of that for which sinful nature hates them; and that for which sinful nature hates them is their holiness. It is for this that the carnal mind is enmity against God, against the law of God, and against the people of God. Now it is accurate arguing, to argue from opposites, that is, from opposite causes, to opposite effects; from opposite natures, to opposite tendencies. Holiness is directly opposite to wickedness, and therefore, as it is the nature of wickedness to hate and oppose holiness; so it must be the nature of holiness to love and delight in holiness.

In heaven, where its true tendency is best ascertained, the holiness of divine things is what principally attracts the holy nature of the saints and angels. This is the divine beauty which chiefly engages the attention, admiration and the praises of the Seraphim: "And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts,

the whole earth *is* full of his glory," *Isa.* vi. 3. "They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty," who "was, and is, and is to come," *Rev.* iv. 8. The glorified saints are engaged in the same way. "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" for *thou* only *art* holy," *Rev.* xv. 4.

The scriptures represent the saints on earth as adoring God chiefly on this account. When they praise God for his power, his holiness also engages their attention: "O sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvellous things; his right hand and his *holy* arm" have "gotten him the victory," *Psa.* xcviii. 1. When they praise him for his justice and terrible majesty, they likewise have respect to his holiness: "Let them praise thy great and terrible name, *for* it *is* HOLY," *Psa.* xcix. 3. See also ver. 5, 9. When they praise God for his mercy and faithfulness, they also notice his HOLINESS: "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of his HOLINESS." *Psa.* xcvii. 11, 12.

By this circumstance therefore professors may try their affections, particularly their love and joy. Various kinds of creatures manifest the difference of their natures, by choosing different things as their chief good, one delighting in what another abhors. Such a difference is there between real saints and unregenerate men. Natural men have no love for the excellency of holy things, at least not on account of their holiness: they have no taste for that kind of good, and may therefore be said not to know it. The saints by the grace and power of God, have it discovered to them; they have that spiritual perception communicated to them, by which they perceive it; and it is this that capti-

ates their hearts, and fills them with delights. By this we may examine our love to God. Does it arise from a supreme delight in this kind of beauty, without being primarily excited by our imagined interest in spiritual blessings? There are often high affections, with great apparent love and joy, which have nothing of this holy relish belonging to them.

More particularly, by what has been said, we may try our discoveries of the glory of the grace and love of God, and our affections arising from thence. The grace of God may appear lovely in two ways; either as BONUM UTILE, *a profitable good*,—that which greatly serves our interest, and in consequence suits our self love; or as BONUM FORMASUM, a *beautiful good*, part of the moral and spiritual excellency of the divine nature. In this latter respect it is that the saints have their hearts primarily affected, and their love excited by the free grace of God.

From what has been said, it appears, that our having a clear sense of the natural perfections of God, even if we are greatly affected by them, or having any other view of God than that which arises from a perception of his moral perfections, is no certain evidence of grace. In particular, we may have a sense of the greatness and majesty of God, for these are only natural perfections, and yet be entirely blind to the beauty of his moral perfections.

It has been shown already, in what was said upon the first distinguishing mark of gracious affections, that that which is spiritual, is entirely different in its nature from all that any unregenerate man can possibly experience. But those who are without grace, may possess a clear view, and a very affecting sense of the majesty and power

of God; for this is what the devils possess, though they have lost the spiritual knowledge of God, a sense of the excellency of his moral perfections. They are without any sense of that kind of beauty, yet they have a clear knowledge of the natural glory of God. They behold this, are affected by it, and therefore tremble before him. At the day of judgment, all intelligent creatures shall behold this glory of God. When Christ shall come in the glory of his Father, and every eye shall see him, he will manifest his infinite majesty to every one in the clearest and most striking manner. Then the wicked shall call to the mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne. The enemies of God shall behold his glory, and live in a clear and affecting view of it, in hell forever. He hath declared his immutable purpose as to this subject, in so often annexing these words to the threatenings he denounces against the wicked; "And they shall know that I am the Lord." Wicked men and devils will have a deep sense of every thing that belongs to the glory of God, except the beauty of his moral perfections. They will have a deep sense of every thing belonging to his moral perfections themselves, except their beauty and amiableness. They will know and acknowledge that he is perfectly just and righteous, that he is of purer eyes than to behold moral evil with approbation, and that he cannot look upon iniquity but with the greatest abhorrence. Nebuchadnezzar had a very affecting view of the infinite greatness and majesty of God, of his supreme and absolute dominion, of his mighty and irresistible power; and was convinced that he, and all the inhabitants of the earth were as nothing before him. He had likewise a clear conviction of the justice of God, and a most affecting

view of his great goodness, *Dan.* iv. 1, 2, 3, 34, 35, 37. And the sense that Darius had of the perfections of God, seems to have been similar to his, *Dan.* vi. 25, &c. But the saints and angels behold the glory of God, as that glory results from his holiness; and it is this sight only that will humble the hearts of men, draw them to God, and effectually change them. A sight of the majesty and greatness of God, may overpower the mind; but if the moral beauty of God is hid, the enmity of the heart will remain in its full strength; no love will be enkindled, the WILL will remain inclined to evil; whereas the first glimpse of the moral and spiritual glory of God, shining into the heart, will produce holiness of disposition as it were with omnipotent power, and absolute certainty.

The view which natural men may have of the greatness of God, may affect them in various ways: it may not only terrify them, but it may excite their joy and gratitude. From the principles of nature, this will be the effect of it, upon the real or supposed communication of some extraordinary mercy. It has been already shown, that the receipt of favours may, by the influence of natural principles, affect the heart with gratitude and praise to God; but if a person, at the same time that he receives particular favours from God, has a sense of his infinite greatness, and of his own comparative meanness, his gratitude and praise will be still more elevated. At his restoration, a sense of the greatness of God had this effect upon Nebuchadnezzar, after he had been driven from the society of men, and had had his dwelling with the beasts. A sense of the infinite majesty of God excited his gratitude, so that in the most lofty terms, he extols and magnifies him, and calls upon all the world to join in the exercise. Now if a natural man, at the

same time that he is powerfully affected by the greatness and majesty of God, entertains a strong persuasion that this God has adopted him as his child and special favourite, and promises him everlasting glory, this will, according to the principles of nature, have a tendency to raise his joy and praise to a great height.

It is therefore beyond doubt, that too much weight has been laid, by many persons, upon discoveries of the natural perfections of God, operating in this manner, without any real view of his holiness. Experience abundantly corroborates the declarations of Scripture, and the dictates of reason, for there have been many persons who were very far from possessing a proportionate degree of the Christian spirit and temper, or from uniformly producing the fruits of righteousness, who seemed to be overpowered by the greatness and majesty of God. Their discoveries have produced effects directly opposite to those proceeding from truly spiritual and gracious influence.

Not that a sense of the natural perfections of God, is not exceedingly useful and necessary. For as I observed before, this is implied in a manifestation of the beauty of his holiness. Though unregenerate men may have a sense of the natural perfections of God; yet undoubtedly this view is more common with the saints. Grace enables us to perceive these things in a clearer light than natural men do. It not only enables us to perceive the natural attributes of God, but also that *beauty* of those attributes, which, according to our way of conceiving of God, is derived from his holiness.

IV. In the production of gracious affections, our minds are so enlightened, that we obtain proper and spiritual views of divine things.

Holy affections are not heat without light, but invariably arise from some information conveyed to the understanding. The child of God is graciously affected, because he sees, and understands something more of divine things than he did before ;—something more of God,—of Christ,—and of the glorious things exhibited in the gospel: "Every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God," 1 *John* iv. 7. "I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment," *Phil.* i. 9. "They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge," *Rom.* x. 2. "Put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge," *Col.* iii. 10. "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto me," *John* vi. 45. Knowledge, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, softens the heart, elevates the affections, and so opens the way into the kingdom of heaven.

There are seeming religious affections which do not arise from light in the understanding; and these affections, let them be ever so strong, are not spiritual. Such is the nature of man, that he cannot be affected, but by something of which he conceives an idea. But in many persons those conceptions by which they are affected, have nothing in them of the nature of knowledge or information. For instance, when a person is affected by a lively idea, suddenly excited in his mind, of a very beautiful countenance, a vivid light, or some other extraordinary appearance ; there is something conceived by the mind, but there is nothing of the nature of instruction. Persons do not become wiser by such conceptions, or know more about God, or a Mediator between God and man,

or the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, or any thing contained in the doctrines of the gospel.

Truly spiritual and gracious affections, arise from the understanding being enlightened as to what is taught respecting God and Jesus Christ; so that we clearly discover the glorious nature of God, and obtain new views of Christ in his fulness and divine excellencies. Those things which relate to the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, are presented to our minds with a new aspect, in consequence of which we now understand those holy and divine doctrines which before were foolishness to us. Such light, communicated to the understanding, is entirely different from lively conceptions of shapes and colours, of brightness and glory, or of voices and sounds. If all gracious affections arise from light in the understanding, those which are produced by mere impressions on the imagination, are not gracious. Hence it also appears, that affections arising from texts of scripture, impressed on the mind, are delusive; at least, when no information is communicated to the understanding by those texts; and when the manner of their coming to the mind, rather than any thing taught by them, is the ground of those affections. When Christ makes his word the means of gracious affections, it is by opening the scriptures to our understandings. "Did not our hearts burn within us," exclaimed the disciples, "while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" *Luke* xxiv. 32. It appears also that religious affections which are occasioned by the coming of a text of scripture to our minds, must be delusive, when those affections are founded on something supposed to be taught by it, but which in fact is not, nor in any other part of scripture, because such imagined

instruction is nothing but a mistake and misapprehension. As for instance, when persons suppose that they are expressly taught by some passage of scripture, thus coming to their minds, that *they* in particular are beloved of God, or that *their* sins in particular are forgiven, this is a mistake, or misapprehension: the scriptures no where refer directly to the individual persons who are beloved of God, and whose sins are pardoned; they only point to the qualities which are the object of the divine approbation, and therefore our interest in his favour is not to be ascertained from scripture in any other way than by a reference to those qualities. Things are not to be learnt from the scriptures, but *as* they are taught in the scriptures.

In these instances, as well as in some others which might be mentioned, ardent affections arise from ignorance, rather than from knowledge. Some persons, when they enjoy freedom in prayer, believe that God is with them, without examining the cause of that freedom, and this persuasion elevates, and consequently increases their affections. There are many other sources from whence this freedom may rise, besides the spiritual presence of God. Some persons are much affected by striking thoughts which come into their minds about scripture, and which they call the teaching of the Spirit of God. They frequently ascribe the workings of their own minds, to the special and immediate influence of the Holy Spirit. There are instances in which it is evident, that the primary source of affection, is some bodily sensation. The animal spirits, probably, by satanic influence, are suddenly and unaccountably put into a very agreeable motion, so that a pleasant sensation is experienced. The mind is exhilarated, and the soul, through the laws of union between it and the body, feels

pleasure. Hence from ignorance, it is concluded that this proceeds from the Holy Spirit.

And even though our religious affections do arise from some light in the understanding, those affections are not gracious, unless the light which is the cause of them is spiritual. Affections may be excited by that knowledge of divine things which is obtained by mere human teaching, and the common improvement of the mental powers. We may be affected by the knowledge of the things of religion as some persons have been by discoveries in mathematics and natural philosophy. Religious affections may be excited by common illuminations of the Spirit of God, as in the case of some persons of whom we read in scripture, who, it is said, were once enlightened.

The scriptures teach us nothing more clearly than that there is a spiritual, supernatural knowledge of divine things, peculiar to the saints. It is certainly a kind of knowledge or perception of divine things of which natural men are destitute, which is spoken of in the following passages: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritualllly discerned." 1 *Cor.* ii. 14. See also to the same purpose, 1 *John* iii. 6. 3 *John* 11. *John* vi. 45. xiv. 19. xvii. 3. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father," but "the Son, and *he* to whomsoever the Son will reveal *him*." *Mat.* xi. 27.

From hence we may infer wherein spiritual knowledge consists; for if there is in the saints a kind of perception, in its nature quite different from all that natural men can possess; it must, of course, consist in certain ideas, or sensations of mind different from every thing that natural men

experience; and this is the same thing as saying, that it consists in the sensations of a new, spiritual principle.

The Apostle clearly asserts, that the chief thing discovered by spiritual light, and which is therefore the subject of spiritual knowledge, is the glory of divine things: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.—For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 *Cor.* iv. 3, 4, 6. "But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord." iii. 18. The scriptures often give us a summary of true religion, as consisting in the love of divine things; and therefore that knowledge which is the foundation of true religion, must be the perception of the loveliness of divine things. It is evident that there is nothing belonging to divine things, besides their moral excellency, and the properties and qualities resulting from thence, but what natural men and devils can perceive, and will clearly and fully perceive to all eternity.

From what has been said, we necessarily come to this conclusion, that a spiritual understanding consists in a deep conviction of the holiness, or moral perfection of divine things, together with all that discernment and knowledge of real religion, which depends upon, and flows from, such a conviction.

It is not speculation merely that is concerned in

this kind of knowledge; nor can we draw a clear distinction between the two faculties of understanding and will, as acting in the business of religion. When the mind is sensible of the beauty and amiableness of any object, there is invariably a delight in the idea of that object; and this delight is an impression of which the soul is the subject as endowed with perception, inclination, and will.

We should distinguish between a mere notional knowledge, and that knowledge, in the possession of which, the mind not only *speculates*, but *feels* and *relishes*. That kind of knowledge by which we receive the impression of loveliness, or hatefulness, is not exactly the same kind of knowledge, as that by which we perceive the nature of a square, or a triangle. The one is mere speculative knowledge; the other a knowledge connected with the affections, in which something more than mere intellect is concerned,—something that not only beholds, but has *inclination*, and *is pleased*, or *displeased*.

The Apostle evidently makes a distinction between mere speculation in religion and spiritual knowledge. The former is called, "the form of knowledge," *Rom.* ii. 20. The latter is often represented under the idea of relishing, or tasting: "Now thanks *be* unto God," who "always causeth us to triumph in Christ Jesus, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge in every place," 2 *Cor.* ii. 14. "As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the world, that ye may grow thereby: if so be" that "ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," 1 *Pet.* ii. 2, 3.

Spiritual knowledge primarily consists in this conviction of the moral beauty of divine things; so that no knowledge can be called spiritual any further than as it arises from this source, and is

attended by this principle. But in the second place, it includes all that discernment or knowledge of the things of religion which flows from such a conviction.

When the beauty and loveliness of divine things are manifested to the soul, a new world is presented to its view. The glory of all the perfections of God, and of every thing belonging to the divine Being, is exhibited. Through this perception of the moral beauty of divine things, the sufficiency of Christ as a Mediator, is discovered; for it is only by discerning the beauty of the moral perfections of Christ, that we perceive the sufficiency of his atonement as a Mediator.

It is by this means that we obtain a clear view of the fitness of the way of salvation to deliver us from sin and hell, and to bring us to a state of everlasting happiness, in a way perfectly agreeing with the moral perfections of God. It is thus that we discover the excellency of the word of God. Take away all the moral beauty of the scriptures, and the Bible is left a dead letter. By viewing the moral beauty of divine things, we perceive the true foundation of our obligations, the amiableness of religious duties, and the worthiness of God to be submitted to, esteemed, honoured and served according to his requirements. By this also is perceived the evil of sin; for he who has a clear perception of the beauty of holiness, must necessarily perceive the hatefulness of sin. By this we likewise form an idea of the glory of heaven, consisting in the happiness that arises from perfect holiness. He who perceives the beauty of holiness, or real moral good, perceives the most important object in the world; for unless this is perceived, nothing is perceived worth our attention. Unless this is understood, nothing is understood

that is worth the exercise of our understandings. This is the beauty of the Godhead. He in effect knows nothing, who knows not this. Well, therefore, may the scriptures represent those who are destitute of that spiritual perception, by which the beauty of holiness is perceived, as totally blind: and well may regeneration, in which this divine perception is communicated to the soul by its Creator, be represented as opening the eyes of the blind. For if what has been said is considered, it will be manifest, that when a person has this perception and knowledge given him, he will view nothing as he did before; though before he knew all things after the flesh, yet henceforth he will know them so no more; he is become a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new, 2 *Cor.* v. 16, 17.

And besides what has already been mentioned, all true experimental knowledge of religion arises from this perception of spiritual beauty. He who perceives not the beauty of holiness, is destitute of all holy comfort and delight—all the consoling influences of the Spirit of God.

Hence it is evident that implanting this spiritual and holy perception, produces a great change; and were it not for the very imperfect degree, in which this perception is in general communicated at first, the change would be much greater, and more remarkable than if a man, born blind, should all at once, and in the clear light of the sun, have the sense of seeing imparted unto him.

This is that knowledge of divine things, from whence all truly gracious affections proceed; and by which, therefore, all religious affections are to be tried. Those affections which arise wholly from any other knowledge; or result from any other perception, or state of mind, are delusive.

From what has been said, the difference between that light which is sometimes possessed by natural men, and that saving instruction which is communicated to the saints, may be easily ascertained. The latter consists in beholding the moral excellency, and holy beauty of divine things: the former in that knowledge of them, which may be obtained by the ordinary exercise of our faculties. In those convictions of conscience, of which natural men are often the subjects, the Spirit of God communicates no knowledge of the moral beauty of divine things; but only assists the mind to a clearer view of the guilt of sin, and its certain connexion with the evil of suffering: and to a clearer view of the natural perfections of God, consisting not so much in his holy and glorious beauty, as in his awful and terrible greatness. A clear sight of this will fully awaken the conscience of wicked men at the day of judgment, without any spiritual light. It is a less degree of this, which, without spiritual light, awakens the consciences of natural men now. In those common illuminations, the mind is only assisted to a clearer perception of the natural good existing in divine things. Thus the minds of unregenerate men are sometimes elevated by considering the happiness and glory of heaven. There are many things revealed in the gospel, respecting God and the way of salvation, which suit the principle of self-love. For instance, in the goodness of God, and in the wonderful love of Christ to sinners, there is a natural good, which all men love as they love themselves, as well as a spiritual and holy beauty, which is perceived only by the regenerate. There are many things belonging to the word of God, as delivered to us in the gospel, which may induce natural men to receive it with joy. All the hatred of unregenerate men to sin,

is as much from a principle of nature, as their hatred to a serpent or a tiger; and all their love of Christian virtue, is from no higher a principle than that which renders silver and gold amiable in the estimation of an avaricious merchant.

From what has been said of the nature of spiritual knowledge, it appears, that it does not consist in any new doctrinal views, or in having suggested to the mind any new proposition, not before read or heard of; for it is evident that such suggestions are entirely different from giving to the mind a new taste, or relish. It is also evident, that spiritual knowledge does not consist in any new doctrinal explanation of any part of the scriptures; for still, this is but doctrinal knowledge, or the knowledge of propositions. The doctrinal explanation of any part of scripture, is only giving us to understand, what are the propositions contained, or taught in that part of scripture.

Hence it appears likewise, that a spiritual knowledge of scripture, does not consist in understanding the mystical meaning of its parables, types and allegories; for this is only doctrinal knowledge. It is possible that a person may know how to interpret all the types, parables and allegories in the Bible, and not have one beam of spiritual light in his mind, being destitute of that perception of the holy beauty of divine things which has been spoken of. It is clear from what the Apostle says, that we may understand all such mysteries, and have no saving grace: "And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and" [possess] "all knowledge, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing," 1 *Cor.* xiii. 2. Those persons, therefore, are much mistaken, who are exalted with an opinion of their spiritual attainments, merely from notions which come into their

heads, respecting the mystical meaning of certain passages of scripture, as though this was a spiritual knowledge of those passages, immediately given them by the Spirit of God.

It is also evident that, when persons are informed of their duty, by having it immediately suggested to their minds,—this is not spiritual knowledge. Such suggestions possess nothing of the nature of spiritual light. This knowledge is only one kind of doctrinal knowledge. A proposition concerning the will of God, is as properly a doctrine of religion, as a proposition concerning the nature of God; and a mere knowledge of either of these kinds of propositions, however suggested, or obtained, differs very much from our having the holy beauty of divine things manifested to our souls. There was no spiritual and gracious light in Balaam, though he had the will of God suggested to him by the Spirit of God, respecting the way he should go, and what he should do and say.

Admitting that the will of God, concerning our actions, is suggested by some text of scripture, brought suddenly to our minds, the case is not altered. The suggestion being accompanied by an apposite text of scripture, does not cause that suggestion to be of the nature of spiritual instruction. Suppose, for instance, a person in doubt whether it was his duty to go into some popish or heathen land, where he was likely to be exposed to many difficulties and dangers, and should pray unto God to show him the path of duty; and that after prayer he should have these words impressed upon his mind in a sudden manner, as if they were spoken to him; "Fear not to go down into Egypt:—I will go with thee, and I will also surely bring thee up *again*," *Gen.* xlvi. 3, 4. This passage related solely to Jacob, and yet it is now supposed that it

possesses a further application ;—that by Egypt is meant the particular country upon which the person's thoughts are employed, that he is to go thither, and that God will certainly conduct him back. There is nothing of spiritual light, or the gracious leadings of the Spirit, in this. To understand the scriptures spiritually, is to understand them properly, and not to attach to them a new meaning. When the mind is spiritually enlightened, so as properly to understand the scriptures, it is enabled to see that in them which before was not seen, merely in consequence of mental blindness. Now if it is merely in consequence of mental blindness, that we do not perceive the true meaning of scripture, it is evident that our being enlightened does not give a new meaning to that scripture. It is no blindness not to see a meaning which does not exist. "Open thou mine eyes," says the Psalmist, "that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." *Psa.* cxix. 18. The reason why the wondrous things of the word of God are not beheld by us, is, that our eyes are not opened. Now this would not be the case, if the true meaning of scripture was not the same, whether we perceive it or not ; or if a new meaning was added by the manner in which particular passages are suggested to the mind. Attaching a new meaning to scripture, is the same thing as making new scriptures ;—it is properly adding to the word, and this is threatened with a most awful curse. To understand the scriptures spiritually, is to have the mind enlightened to behold the spiritual excellency of the glorious things contained in them, and which were always contained in them ;—it is to behold the amiable manifestations of the divine perfections, the excellency and sufficiency of Christ, the suitable-

ness of the way of salvation, the spiritual glory of the precepts and promises of the Bible, &c.

The leadings of the Holy Spirit, consist in two things;—in giving us instruction as to our duty, and in disposing us to comply with that instruction. But so far as the gracious leadings of the Spirit of God relate merely to instruction, they consist in giving a spiritual and discriminating taste as to real moral beauty. I have already shown the nature of spiritual knowledge. When an amiable and holy action is suggested to the mind of a gracious person, that person, if in the lively exercise of his spiritual taste, at once perceives a beauty in that action, and his conduct is influenced accordingly. On the contrary, if an unworthy, unholy action is suggested, he perceives nothing but deformity, and is immediately displeased with it. This holy taste leads him to think of that which, in a moral view, is truly lovely, as naturally as a healthy appetite suggests the idea of its proper food. Thus a regenerate person is led by the Spirit, as he is directed by his holy taste or disposition; whereby, in the lively exercise of grace, he easily distinguishes good from evil; and in most cases, knows at once, what is a suitable behaviour towards God, and towards man. He needs no particular deduction to influence his conduct, nor any other argument than what the beauty which is perceived, and the goodness which is tasted, suggest. Jesus Christ blames the Pharisees, that they did not, even of their own selves, without miracles, judge what was right. The Apostle Paul evidently has respect to this way of judging of spiritual beauty, when he says, "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, that acceptable and perfect will of God," *Rom.* xii. 2.

A holy disposition and spiritual taste, when grace is strong and lively, will enable a person to determine what actions are right, and becoming a Christian, not only more speedily, but far more correctly, than the greatest abilities without them. The tendency of a stone, let fall from a height, shows the way to the centre of the earth more accurately, and in far less time, than the ablest mathematician could demonstrate it in any other way. So likewise will a spirit of love to God, and a heavenly disposition, guide us in our behaviour.

It is an exceedingly difficult thing for a wicked man to demean himself like a real Christian. "When he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth *him*, and he saith to every one *that* he *is* a fool," *Eccl.* x. 3. "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright, but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness," *Prov.* xv. 2.

The saints in thus judging of actions by a spiritual taste, have not always a particular reference to the express rules of the word of God, though their taste itself is in general subject to those rules. A spiritual taste very much assists the mind in its reasonings on the word of God, as it removes prejudice; and through the harmony subsisting between the disposition of a real Christian, and the doctrines and precepts of the sacred writings, its meaning, in general, is easily ascertained. This disposition naturally tends to bring texts of scripture to our minds, just as a particular state of appetite frequently brings particular kinds of meat and drink to mind, such as are agreeable to that state.

But this leading of the Spirit is very different from that which some persons imagine, consisting not in teaching them statutes and precepts already given; but in giving them new ones, by immediate

suggestion or impulse. Those persons do not profess to ascertain what is the will of God by a renewed taste, or corresponding disposition, but from an immediate impression upon their minds. That leading of the Spirit which is peculiar to the people of God, imparts that wisdom and holy discernment which are so often spoken of in the word of God, and which infinitely excel, in importance and certainty, mere impressions on the imagination.

What has been said of the nature of spiritual knowledge, as consisting chiefly, and most essentially, in a divine supernatural principle, or holy disposition, not only shows that there is no such knowledge in this supposed leading of the Spirit; but also exhibits the difference between spiritual knowledge, and all kinds of enthusiasm, all imaginary sights of God, and Christ, and heaven; all supposed testimonies of the love of God by immediate, inward suggestion, and all applications of the words of scripture, as though they were *now* spoken immediately by God to particular persons.

In general, false experience raises the affections to a great height. A chief part of the false religion which has appeared in the world, in different ages, has consisted in such discoveries as these, and in the affections which have arisen from them. The Pythagoreans, and many other ancient Heathens; and the Essenes, an ancient sect among the Jews, about the time of the Apostles, had strange raptures, and pretended to immediate revelations from heaven. Many of the Gnostics, the Montanists, and other sects of heretics, in the primitive ages of the Christian Church, pretended to immediate converse with God, and Christ, and angels. The Monks, Anchorites, and Recluses, who formerly abounded in the Church of Rome, pretended to extraordinary experience, and great spirituality. So did dif-

ferent sects of enthusiasts, who swarmed in the world immediately after the Reformation; those in England in the days of Oliver Cromwell, the adherents of Mrs. Hutchinson in New-England,* together with the late French prophets and their followers. And in these things also, the religion of the various kinds of enthusiasts of the present day seems to consist. It is chiefly by such a religion as this that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, and produces confusion amongst professors of serious piety, during the most promising revivals.—When the Spirit of God is poured out in a more abundant manner, the old serpent, as soon as possible, introduces this false religion, and mingles it with the true. The pernicious consequences of this are not easily imagined, until we behold its baneful effects, and the dreadful desolations produced by it. Ministers should therefore maintain a strict guard against this kind of delusion, especially at a time of great awakening; for many persons, particularly among the common people, are easily seduced by such things as have a show of extraordinary religion.

All the delusions of Satan, by which those persons are carried away, who are under the influence of false religion, seem to be formed in the imagination. This is the devil's grand lurking place, the nest of foul and delusive spirits. It is probable that Satan cannot come at the soul of man, to excite any thoughts, or to produce any effects there, but through the imagination. As to the laws which the Creator has established, or the means which he adopts, for the intercourse of unembodied spirits, we have no information; we know not by what medium they manifest their thoughts *to* each other,

* See a particular and large account of all these sects by Samuel Rutherford, in his "Display of the Spirit of Anti-Christ."

or excite thoughts in each other. But as to spirits united to bodies, those bodies are the only medium of communication. It is, therefore, not to be supposed that Satan can excite thoughts, or produce effects, in the soul of man, any otherwise than by some motion of the animal spirits, or by causing some alteration in something belonging to the body. There is reason to think that the devil cannot produce thoughts in the soul directly, or in any other way than through the medium of the body, because he cannot directly know the thoughts of the soul. This knowledge is peculiar to the omniscient God. It is not likely that the devil can directly produce an effect which is out of the reach of his immediate view. But if the devil cannot produce thoughts in the soul directly, or in any other way than by the animal spirits, or by the body, then it follows, that he never brings to pass any thing in the soul, but through the imagination, or by exciting ideas. As to reflection, abstract reasoning, &c. and those thoughts and inward motions which are the fruit of these acts of the mind, they are not the immediate effects of impressions on the body. So that it must be only through the imagination that Satan has access to the soul, to tempt and delude it. And this seems to be the reason why persons afflicted with melancholy, are in general remarkably subject to the suggestions and temptations of Satan; that being a disease which particularly affects the animal spirits, and is attended by weakness in the brain, the fountain of the animal spirits. It is by impressions made on the brain, that ideas are excited in the mind, through the motion of the animal spirits; and when the brain is diseased and weakened, it is less under the command of the higher faculties of the soul, is overpowered by the disordered motion of the animal spirits, and yields the more easily to

extrinsic impressions. Thus Satan, when he casts those horrid suggestions into the minds of melancholy persons, in which they have no hand themselves, does it by exciting ideas, either of some dreadful word or sentence, or of something else that is horrid. And when he tempts other persons, he does it by presenting to the imagination, in a lively and alluring manner, the objects of their lusts. Innumerable are the ways by which ideas may be excited in the imagination, so as to lead the mind to all kinds of evil thoughts.

If persons keep no guard at those avenues by which Satan has access to the soul, he is likely to be a frequent guest; especially if, instead of guarding against him, they expose themselves to his attacks, and invite him by cherishing counterfeit illuminations and graces, inward whispers, immediate suggestions, and other impressions on the imagination. There are many persons who, deluded by such impressions, seek after them, and have a continued succession of them, especially when their pride and vanity have most occasion for them, in order to make a fair appearance amongst professors.

I do not assert, however, that no affections are spiritual which are attended by something imaginary. When our minds are fully occupied, and our thoughts intensely engaged, our imaginations are often stronger, and our ideas more lively. This is the case especially with some constitutions of body. But there is a great difference between lively imaginations, arising from strong affections, and strong affections arising from lively imaginations. Undoubtedly the former often exist in cases of truly gracious affection. The affections do not arise from the imagination, nor have they any dependence upon it; but on the contrary, the imagination is only the accidental effect, or consequence of the affection, through the infirmity of human nature.

But when the affection arises from the imagination, and is built upon it, instead of being founded upon spiritual illumination, then is the affection, however elevated, of no value.

V. Gracious affections are attended by a rational, and spiritual conviction, respecting the truth and reality of divine things.

This seems to be implied in the text adopted as the foundation of this discourse: "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet BELIEVING, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

Those persons who are truly gracious, have such a conviction as to the truth of the great subjects of the gospel, that they no longer halt between two opinions; this conviction is effectual, so that the gospel has the power and influence of reality, and accordingly rules their affections, and governs their conduct throughout the rest of their lives. With respect to Jesus Christ, as being the Son of God, and Saviour of the world, they not only yield their assent to this doctrine, as they do to many subjects of doubtful speculation, but their minds are so enlightened, that they are clearly and fully convinced of its truth and importance. And as to what Jesus Christ has revealed of the eternal purpose, and designs of God respecting fallen man, and the glorious things prepared for the saints in another world, they feel the clearest conviction of their truth. Hence those things are of great weight with them, and have a powerful influence upon their minds, and in reference to their practice.

That all true Christians have such a conviction of the truth of what is revealed in the gospel, is abundantly evident from the Holy Scriptures. I will quote a few passages: "Thou hast the words

of eternal life, and we believe, and are sure that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," *John* vi 68, 69. "I have manifested thy name unto the men" whom "thou gavest me out of the world.—Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and know surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me," *John* xvii. 6, 7, 8. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," *Heb* xi. 1. See the whole of the chapter. "Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit; and we have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us," 1 *John* iv. 13—16. "For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world *even* our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" v. 4, 5. "For we know, that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God.—Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that whilst we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord; for we walk by faith, not by sight," 2 *Cor.* v. 1, 6, 7.

There are many affections which are not attended by such a conviction of the judgment; and many impressions, called by those who possess them, divine discoveries, which are affecting but not convincing. Though for a time, those who experience them appear to be more persuaded of the truth of the things of religion than they

formerly were, and though they yield a forward assent, like many of the hearers of Christ, yet they have no thorough and effectual conviction, nor is there any abiding change produced in them. There are many persons who have had their minds exceedingly elevated by certain affections, who think they are converted, but are no more convinced of the truth of the gospel, than they formerly were; or at least there is no remarkable alteration in them: they do not live under the influence and power of a realizing conviction of the infinite importance of divine things. If they did, it would be impossible for them to live as they do. As their affections are not attended by a thorough conviction of the judgment, however elevated, they are not at all to be depended upon; they are like the blaze of tow, the crackling of thorns, or the forward blade on stony ground, which has no root to maintain its life.

Some persons under the influence of strong and ardent affections, and a confident persuasion of the goodness of their state, very ignorantly talk about a kind of immediate perception of the truth of the word of God. Some text of scripture is forcibly impressed upon their minds, immediately declaring, as they suppose, that their sins are forgiven Perhaps they have a number of such impressions succeeding each other This they call a *seeing* the truth of the word of God. But the whole of their faith amounts to no more than a strong confidence as to their spiritual safety, and a conviction that those words are true, which, as they imagine, tell them that they are in a good state; when in reality there is no scripture declaring, in a direct manner, that any particular person is accepted of God This important knowledge is to be obtained only by comparing our

present views and character, with the declarations of scripture; so that this, instead of being a real perpcetion of the truth of the word of God, is all a delusion.

But even if our affections do indeed arise from a strong persuason of the truth of the Christian religion, they are no better on that account, unless this persuasion is a rational persuasion, or a conviction founded on real evidence, or that which is a proper ground of conviction. We may have a strong persuasion that theChristian religion is true, when this persuasion is built altogether on education, or the opinion of others. Mahometans are strongly persuaded of the truth of their religion, because their fathers,and neighbours,and countrymen believe it. That belief of the Christian religion, which is built upon the same grounds as the Mahometan's belief of his religion, is the very same kind of belief. And though what is believed, is much more important, that does not render the belief itself of a better kind; for though what is believed happens to be true, yet the belief of it is not owing to its truth, but to education, or early imbibed prejudice. As the conviction is no better than the Mahometan's conviction, so the affections which flow from it, are no better than the religious affections of Mahometans.

But supposing the belief of Christian doctrines, from which these affections arise, is not from education, but from rational conviction, it will not necessarily follow that such affections are gracious; for, in order to this, it is requisite, not only that the faith from which these affections spring should be a rational, but also a spiritual conviction. No person will doubt but that some unregenerate men yield a kind of assent to the truth of the Christian religion, from the rational proofs by which that

truth is supported. Judas, without doubt, from what he saw and heard, believed Jesus to be the Messiah, but yet he was all along a devil. *John*, vi. 70. Simon the sorcerer believed, when he beheld the miracles, and the signs which were done; yet he remained in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. *Acts*, viii. 13, 23. And if there is such a conviction of the judgment in some natural men, we cannot doubt but that religious affections may arise from that conviction. We read of some who believed for a while, who were greatly affected, and who instantaneously, and with joy, received the word.

It is evident that there is a spiritual conviction of the truth of the gospel,—a belief which is peculiar to those persons who are regenerated, and have the spirit of God in his holy communications, and indwelling as a vital principle. It is also evident, that this conviction not only differs from what natural men experience, in that it is accompanied by good works, but that the belief itself is different, the assent and conviction of the judgment is of a peculiar kind. This is clearly proved from scripture: "According to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness," *Tit.* i. 1. The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God," *John*, xvi. 27.—"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God," 1 *John*, iv. 15. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God," v. 1. "He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself," 10.

What a spiritual conviction is, we may ascertain from what has been said already of spiritual knowledge. Conviction arises from the illumination of

the understanding. Our passing a right judgment upon things, depends upon our having a right conception or idea of those things. Hence it follows, that a spiritual conviction of the truth of the gospel, is such a conviction as arises from a spiritual view, or conception of the gospel. And this also is evident from the scriptures, which often represent a saving belief of the reality, and divinity of the things exhibited in the gospel, as springing from the enlightening of the mind by the Holy Spirit, so as to give us a right conception of those things: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast HID these things from the wise and prudent, and hast REVEALED them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father, and he to whom he will REVEAL him," *Luke*. x. 21, 22. "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one who SEETH the Son, and BELIEVETH on him," should "have everlasting life." *John*, vi. 40 From this passage it is evident that faith arises from a spiritual sight of Christ." See also *John*, xvii. 6, 7, 8. *Matt.* xvi. 16, 17. 1 *John*, v. 10. *Gal.* i. 14—16.

If a spiritual conviction of the reality and divinity of what is exhibited in the gospel, arises from a spiritual knowledge of those things, then the mind is spiritually convinced of their truth and divinity, when our conviction arises either immediately, or remotely, from a spiritual sense, or view of their divine excellency and glory. This clearly follows from what has been already said; and upon this point the scriptures are very express and decisive: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that BELIEVE

not, lest the light of the GLORIOUS GOSPEL of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. —For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the LIGHT OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GLORY OF GOD in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 *Cor.* iv. 3, 6. "But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass, the GLORY OF THE LORD, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 *Cor.*. iii. 18. Nothing can be more evident than that a saving belief of the gospel is here intended;—a belief arising from the mind being enlightened to behold the divine glory of those things which it reveals.

This view of the divine glory of those things which are exhibited in the gospel, has a tendency to convince the mind of their divinity both *directly* and *indirectly*.

1. A view of this divine glory convinces the mind of the divinity of those things, as it is in itself a *direct* and *powerful* evidence, especially when the discovery is clear, or when the supernatural taste, spoken of above, is communicated in a considerable degree.

He who has his judgment thus *directly* convinced of the divinity of the gospel, by a clear view of its divine glory, has a rational conviction, because the glory of divine things is itself the most direct, and the strongest evidence of their divinity. He who truly perceives the transcendent glory of divine things, is convinced of their divinity, as it were intuitively; he beholds that in them wherein their divinity chiefly consists; for from this glory, which so immensely exceeds all other glory, we mainly deduce our notions of divinity. God is distinguished from all other beings chiefly by his divine glory. Those persons, therefore, who

perceive the stamp of this glory upon divine things, behold that in them from whence we chiefly derive our ideas of the divinity of their nature. Thus a person may have a kind of intuitive knowledge of the divinity of what the gospel exhibits. He does not conclude, however, without any deduction or argument at all, that its doctrines and precepts are from God, but this conviction is obtained without any long chain of argument; the evidence is direct, the mind ascends to the truth of the gospel by one step only,—its divine glory.

It would be very strange for any professing Christian to deny that there is an excellency in divine things, so transcendent, and so exceedingly different from the glory of every thing else, that, if it were seen, it would very clearly, and at once distinguish them. We cannot reasonably doubt that those things which are divine, which belong to the Supreme Being, are vastly different from all that is human; and that there is a godlike, glorious excellency in them, which so distinguishes them from those things which are of men, that the difference is ineffable, and therefore such as will, if perceived, have a most convincing, satisfying influence upon the human mind, as to their divinity. Doubtless there is a glory, and excellency in the Divine Being, by which he is infinitely distinguished from all other beings; and it would be very unreasonable to deny that it is possible for God to give manifestations of his distinguishing excellency, in those things by which he is pleased to make himself known. There are natural excellencies which very clearly indicate the superiority of their subject or author. How vastly is the conversation of an intelligent man different from that of a little child! and how clearly distinguishable are the works of some men of great genius, as Homer,

Cicero, Milton, Locke, Addison, &c. from the works of inferior, though well-informed men! No limits can be set to the different degrees of mental excellence, which may be observable in different men; but the appearance of the natural perfections of God, in the manifestations he makes of himself, are undoubtedly more evident and striking. He who is at all acquainted with the works of man, upon viewing the sun, will immediately conclude that it is no human work. It is reasonable to suppose, that when Christ appears at the end of the world in the glory of his Father, it will be with such ineffable appearances of divinity, as will leave no doubt upon the minds of the inhabitants of the world, even of the most obstinate infidels, that he is a divine person.

But above all, the manifestations of the moral and spiritual glory of the Divine Being, carry with them their own evidence. Thus the disciples were assured that Jesus was the Son of God, because "they beheld his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," *John*, i. 14. When Christ appeared to his disciples in the glory of his transfiguration, that manifestation was such as perfectly assured them of his divinity. "We were eye-witnesses of his majesty; for he received from God the Father, honour and glory, when there came such a voice ——from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount," 2 *Pet.* i. 16—18.

Now this distinguishing glory of the Divine Being has its brightest manifestation in the gospel, in the doctrines there taught, the duties there enjoined, and the divine counsels there revealed. And if there is such a distinguishing manifestation

of divine glory in the gospel, it is reasonable to suppose that that glory may be perceived. What should prevent this ? That some do not perceive it, is no argument that it cannot be perceived. If there is such ineffable, distinguishing excellencies in the gospel, it is reasonable to suppose that these excellencies are not to be discerned, but by the special, enlightening influence of the Spirit of God. In order to discern the distinguishing excellencies of the works of authors of great genius, a peculiar taste is required. In the opinion of those who are endowed with a better taste, those things in Milton, which to bad judges appear tasteless, are his inimitable excellencies. If there is a book of which God is the author, it is most reasonable to suppose that its distinguishing glories are of such a nature, that the depravity of the human heart will prevent the unregenerate from perceiving them.

Many of the most important things revealed in the Bible are hid from the eyes of natural men ; the truth of which so immediately depends upon this excellency, or results from it, that as soon as the latter is perceived, the former is cordially believed. As soon as our eyes are opened to behold the holy beauty and glory of divine things, a number of most important doctrines of the gospel, which appear strange to natural men, are at once perceived to be true. As for instance, the truth of what God declares concerning the exceeding evil of sin, is perceived; for the same light which shows the transcendent beauty of holiness, necessarily shows the exceeding odiousness of sin. A person thus enlightened discovers his own sinfulness; he perceives the dreadful pollution of his heart, and in consequence, is convinced of the truth of what the scriptures declare concerning the corruption of human nature, our absolute need of a Saviour, and

the indispensable importance of divine influence. Upon discovering the beauty of holiness, we perceive the glory of those perfections which both reason and scripture attribute to the Divine Being. Having a clear view of the glorious perfections of Deity, we are easily convinced of the truth of what the scriptures declare, as to the dreadful punishment annexed to sin, the impossibility of our making any satisfaction to the injured justice of God, and our need of an atonement of infinite value, for the purpose of making that satisfaction. A sense of spiritual beauty enables the mind to perceive the dignity and glory of the person of Christ, the infinite excellency of the offering he made for us, and its sufficiency to atone for our sins, and to recommend us to God. Thus the Spirit of God shows the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, and by that means we discover the admirable wisdom of the contrivance, and the perfect adaptation of the provision of the gospel to our necessities. What the prophecies of the Old Testament, and the writings of the Apostles declare concerning the glory of Messiah's kingdom, is now understood by us. We now also discover the reasons and ground of our duty.

And besides all this, the truth of what the scriptures say about experimental religion is hereby known; for it is now experienced, and we are convinced that one who knew the heart of man better than we do, was the author of the scriptures. The discovery of such important and glorious truths, necessarily has a powerful influence in convincing the mind of the divinity of the sacred writings.

Unless a man may obtain, in the way already mentioned, a rational and well-founded persuasion of the truth of the gospel from its internal evidence, it is impossible that those who are illiterate,

and unacquainted with history, should have any effectual and satisfactory conviction of its truth at all. They may, without this, perceive a great deal of probability as to its truth; it may appear reasonable for them to give much credit to what learned men tell them; but to have a conviction so clear and strong as to induce them, with cheerfulness, to make the sacrifices that may be required; all the evidence *they* can derive from history, cannot be sufficient After all that learned men have said upon the subject, there will remain innumerable doubts upon their minds. When exercised by some severe trial of their faith, they will be ready to say, "How do we know when these histories were composed? Learned men indeed tell us that their truth was sufficiently attested at the time that they were written; but how can we ascertain that circumstance? They tell us that there is equal reason to believe what they relate, as there is to believe any thing related in reference to the same period; but we cannot be certain of that?"

The gospel was not given for learned men only. There are, perhaps, ninety-nine in a hundred, of those for whom the scriptures were written, who are not capable of any clear conviction of the divine authority of the scriptures, by such arguments as are generally used by learned men. If those who have been brought up in heathenism, must wait for a clear conviction of the truth of Christianity, until they are acquainted with the histories of politer nations, the evidence of the gospel, to them, would be nearly lost, and the propagation of divine truth amongst them infinitely difficult.

It is unreasonable to suppose that God has provided no more than probable evidence of the truth of the gospel. He has furnished the most abundant and satisfactory proofs. The covenant of

grace is ordered in all things and sure; and it is reasonable to conclude that there would be clear evidence, that this *is his* covenant; or, which is the same thing, that the Christian religion is true: otherwise, in vain are those assurances which he has given us of his faithfulness to his covenant, by confirming it with an oath; for the evidence that this *is his* covenant is the foundation on which all those assurances stand. We may, therefore, conclude with confidence, that God has given some evidence that this covenant *is his*, which does not depend upon mere probability; that there are some grounds of assurance, which, if we are not blind to them, tend to produce a firmer persuasion than any arguments from history. It is natural to suppose that God would give the clearest evidence of those things which are of the greatest importance to us, and of the truth of which, if we act rationally, we shall feel the greatest desire to possess the fullest assurance. But it is certain, that, by the greater part of those who live under the gospel, such an assurance is not to be obtained by arguments derived from ancient history.

And if we come to experience and fact, we shall be induced to conclude, that not one in a hundred of those who have been sincere Christians, were convinced of the truth of the gospel in this way. If we read the history of the thousands who, at the time of the Reformation, were martyrs for Christ, and cheerfully suffered extreme tortures, in confidence of the truth of the gospel; and if we consider their circumstances, and want of advantages, we shall be convinced that few of them obtained their confidence from historic evidence. Many of them were women and children, and the greater part of them illiterate persons; all of them had lived in Popish ignorance, and

were but newly brought to the knowledge of the truth. At that time also the arguments for the truth of Christianity from antiquity, and history, had been but very imperfectly studied.

The gospel of the blessed God has its strongest and most appropriate evidence in itself. Great use, however, may be made of arguments deduced from history, and certainly they ought not to be neglected, but rather highly valued. They may be serviceable in confirming the faith of the saints, and in removing the unbelief of infidels. It is still true that there is no spiritual and gracious conviction of the judgment, but what arises from a view of the beauty and glory of divine things; and that this view has a tendency to convince the mind of the truth of the gospel both *directly* and *indirectly*. Having already shown how it does this *directly*, I proceed now,

2. To observe, how a view of this divine glory convinces the human mind of the truth of Christianity, *indirectly*.

1. It does so, as the prejudices of the human heart against divine things are thereby removed. The mind of man is naturally full of enmity against the doctrines of the gospel; and this produces a powerful disadvantage as to those arguments which prove their truth. But when a person has the transcendent excellency of divine things manifested to him, his enmity is destroyed, his prejudices removed, and his reason sanctified. Hence arises a vast difference, as to the force of arguments in convincing the mind. Hence arose the very different success which attended the miracles of Christ in convincing his disciples, from what they had in convincing the Scribes and Pharisees. The minds of his disciples were not more cultivated, but they were sanctified; and those blinding

prejudices, by which the Scribes and Pharisees were influenced, were removed by the view they had of the excellency of Christ and of his doctrines.

2. This view of the divine glory not only removes obstructions from our minds, but positively assists them. It engages our serious attention to divine things, whereby we obtain a clearer view of them, and are enabled more distinctly to perceive their mutual relations. Our ideas of religious objects, which otherwise are faint and obscure, by this means have a light cast upon them, so that the mind can form a more accurate judgment respecting them. He who beholds objects, when the light of the sun shines upon them, is under greater advantage in discerning their true forms and mutual relations, than he who only sees them by star-light.

What has been said, will serve, in some measure, to show the nature of spiritual convictions, as they relate to the truth and importance of divine things; and so will enable us to distinguish truly gracious affections from others; for gracious affections are invariably attended by such a conviction of the judgment.

But before I dismiss this head, it may be necessary to mention the ways by which some persons deceive themselves in this matter; and to notice several things which are sometimes taken for a spiritual and saving belief of the truth of religion; but which are indeed very different from such belief.

First. There is a conviction as to the truth of the great and important facts and doctrines of religion, which arises from the common influences of the Spirit of God. A lively perception of divine things, such as natural men may experience, will produce a conviction of their truth far beyond what was possessed before. For by this means we ob-

tain clear perceptions of the natural perfections of God, and these perceptions tend to convince our minds that the Bible is the word of God.

A lively view of the majesty of God, which natural men may possess, tends to make them sensible of the great evil of sin, and the dreadfulness of that punishment to which it exposes the sinner, and may therefore produce a degree of faith in what the scriptures declare upon these momentous and awful subjects. From a sense of the natural good attendant upon religion, which is sometimes produced by common illuminations, we may be more inclined to believe the great truths of Christianity. —So far we may proceed, and yet have no sense of the moral and holy excellency of religion, and therefore no spiritual conviction of its truth. But yet such convictions are sometimes mistaken for saving convictions; and the affections flowing from them, for saving affections.

Secondly. The extraordinary impressions which are made on the imaginations of some persons, by visions and impulses, often produce a strong persuasion of the truth of invisible things. Though their ultimate tendency is to draw men *from* the word of God; yet at first they often produce a strong conviction of the truth of some things which are revealed in the scriptures. If, for instance, the imagination of any individual is strongly impressed with the idea, or appearance of a person of great beauty and majesty, seated on a throne, and with great authority uttering some remarkable words;—such individual may from hence be confident that there are invisible, spiritual beings;—he may also be confident that the person seen by him was Jesus Christ, and that, therefore, there is such a divine person, who is highly exalted in heaven.—In the same way, the lying miracles of the Papists may

produce in the minds of ignorant, deluded people, a strong persuasion of the truth of many things declared in the New Testament. Thus when images of Christ, in Popish churches, are on some extraordinary occasions, made by priestcraft to appear to the people as if they moved, and talked, and wept, and shed fresh blood;—the people may be fully persuaded that a miracle is wrought by Christ himself, and from hence be confident that there is such a divine person, and that what they are told of his sufferings, and death, and resurrection, and ascension, and his governing the world,—are true. Through the influence of these lying wonders, a kind of conviction may be produced, but it is not the conviction of a mind evangelically enlightened. The invariable and final tendency of the influence of Satan, is to promote delusion; but notwithstanding this, he may so mix lies with truth, that they cannot be easily discovered.—There are no doubt many persons deluded by a counterfeit faith, produced by impressions on their imagination in the manner described above.

Thirdly. Professors may appear to grow in faith, when the foundation of their faith is nothing more than a persuasion of their individual interest in spiritual blessings. They hear of the glorious things of religion; and, believing that all these blessings are theirs, they easily become confident that what they hear is true. It is very obvious that our inclinations and interest, have a powerful influence on our judgments. While a natural man is convinced, that, if there is a heaven and a hell, the latter, and not the former belongs to him, he will endeavour to disbelieve the existence of both; but when he is persuaded that hell belongs only to others, and not to himself, he will easily admit its reality, and will frequently exclaim against

others, for neglecting the means of escaping it. Being confident that God has promised heaven to him, he may appear strong in faith as to its reality, and may have great zeal against that infidelity which denies it.—But I proceed to another distinguishing sign of gracious affections.

VI. Gracious affections are attended by evangelical humiliation.

Humiliation is of two kinds, legal and evangelical. The former may be exercised while we are in a state of nature, the latter is peculiar to the saints; the former is produced by the common, the latter by the special influence of the Spirit of God. In legal humiliation men are made sensible that they are extremely little before the great and terrible God, and that they are wholly helpless in themselves; but they do not possess a correspondent frame of mind, consisting in a disposition to abase themselves, and to exalt God alone. This frame of mind is given in evangelical humiliation only, in which the disposition is changed by a discovery of the holy beauty of the Divine Majesty. In legal humiliation, the conscience is convinced, but the will is not changed,—the disposition is not altered. In legal humiliation, men are brought to despair of helping themselves; in evangelical, they are brought willingly to deny themselves: in the former, they are subdued and forced to the ground; in the latter they are brought sweetly to yield, and with pleasure, to prostrate themselves before the footstool of the Almighty.

Legal abasement has nothing in it of the nature of true virtue; whereas evangelical abasement is that wherein the excellency of Christian grace very much consists. Legal humiliation is useful as a means in order to evangelical; as a common

knowledge of religion, is a means requisite in order to spiritual knowledge. We may be legally humbled, while we have no humility; as the wicked, at the day of judgment, will be fully convinced that they have no righteousness, but are exceedingly guilty, and justly exposed to eternal damnation, without the least mortification of their pride. The essence of evangelical humility consists in such a self-renunciation, or abasement, as becomes a creature, in itself exceedingly sinful, but under a dispensation of grace.

This frame of mind is a most essential circumstance in true religion. The whole constitution of the gospel, every thing belonging to the new covenant, and all the dispensations of God towards fallen man, are calculated to produce this effect on the human heart. Those who are destitute of this, have no true religion, whatever professions they make, or whatever their religious affections are. It is abundantly manifest in the word of God, that humility is that state of mind in his people to which he has a particular respect, and without which nothing is acceptable to him. "The Lord *is* nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as" are "of a contrite spirit," *Psa.* xxxiv. 18. "Though the Lord *be* high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly," *Psa.* cxxxviii. 6. "He giveth grace unto the lowly," *Prov.* iii. 34. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God," *Matt.* v. 3. "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter therein," *Mark* x. 15. See also *Psa.* li. 17. *Isa.* lvii. 15. lxvi. 1, 2. *Mic.* vi. 8. *Matt.* xviii. 34. The centurion of whom we have an account in *Luke* vii. acknowledged that he was not worthy that Christ should enter under his roof, or that he himself should

come to him. Observe the manner in which the woman who was a notorious sinner, came to Christ. She did not think the hair of her head, which is the natural crown and glory of a woman, too good to wipe the feet of her Redeemer. Jesus most graciously received her, and said to her, "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace." The woman of Canaan, when Christ said to her, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs," admitted that she deserved to be so denominated; upon which Christ said to her, "O woman, great *is* thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt," *Matt.* xv. 26—28. "And he spake this parable unto certain" persons who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others," &c. "The publican standing afar off, would not so much as lift up *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful unto me a sinner," *Luke* vii. 37, &c. 1 *Cor.* xi. 15. "I tell you, This man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other," that is, the Pharisee; "for every one that exalteth himself, shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted," *Luke* xviii. 9, &c. "A new heart also will I give you;—and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, &c.—Then shall ye remember your own evil ways; and your doings that *were* not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations," *Ezek.* xxxvi. 26, 27, 31. "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord," xvi. 63.

As we would therefore make the Holy Scriptures our rule, in judging of the nature of true

religion, and particularly of our own state, we should regard this humility as one of the most essential things pertaining to the character of a true Christian. This is the principal part of the great duty of self-denial,—a duty consisting, *first* in denying our worldly interests and gratifications; and *secondly* in renouncing all dependence on our own righteousness. The latter is the more difficult part of self-denial, for though they always go together, yet natural men approach much nearer to the former than the latter. Many Anchorites and Recluses have relinquished the wealth, and pleasures, and common enjoyments of the world, who were very far from renouncing their own righteousness. They never denied themselves for Christ, but only discarded one lust, that another might be more fully cherished and gratified. The strength of that self-righteous, self-exalting spirit, which is natural to man, is almost inconceivable. What will he not do, in order to feed and gratify this principle! What self-denial, in reference to some things, has been exercised by Essenes and and Pharisees among the Jews; by Papists; by many sects of heretics and enthusiasts among professing Christians; by Mahometans; and by Pythagorean Philosophers, and others among the heathen; solely for the purpose of sacrificing to this Moloch of spiritual pride; and in order that they might have something in which to exalt themselves before God, above their fellow men!

There is nothing in which those hypocrites, who make the most splendid show of mortification to the world, and high religious affections, so much fail in, as the humility spoken of above. They make great pretensions to humility, as well as to other graces; and very often there is nothing of which they make a greater profession. They s-

dom however so speak and act, as to produce a savour of Christian humility in what they say and do. They can only declare how much they were humbled at some particular times, abounding very much in debasing expressions about themselves; such as, "I am the least of all the saints;—I am not worthy of the least mercy, or that God should look upon me," &c. Such expressions are very often used by them, not with a humble spirit, but with pharisaical affectation. We must believe that they are *thus* humbled,and feel themselves *so* vile, upon the credit of their saying so; for there appears nothing in their deportment savouring of humility. There are many professors who are full of expressions of their own vileness, who notwithstanding this, expect to be regarded by others as eminent saints. They exclaim against their wicked hearts, and unprofitable lives, and speak as though they regarded themselves as the meanest of the people of God; but should a minister seriously tell them that he feared they had great reason to consider their hearts as very wicked, that indeed they were very unprofitable, and fell very far short of some of their brethren in spiritual attainments; they would think themselves highly injured, and would probably conceive a rooted prejudice against so faithful a friend.

There are some professors who are fluent in talking against legal doctrines, legal preaching, and a legal spirit, who little understand what they exclaim against. A legal spirit is a more subtle thing than we imagine: it is too subtle for them. It lurks, and operates, and prevails in their hearts, and they are most deeply possessed with it, at the time that they are inveighing against it. So far as a man is not emptied of himself, and of his own righteousness, in every form and shape, so far he

is of a legal spirit. A spirit of pride as to our faith, humility, affections, experience, righteousness, or holiness, is a legal spirit. It was not pride in Adam before his fall, to be of a legal spirit; because in the circumstances in which he was placed, he might seek acceptance with God by his own righteousness. But a legal spirit, in a fallen creature, can be nothing but spiritual pride; and on the contrary, a proud spirit, however modified, is a legal spirit. Every man who is lifted up by an elevated opinion of his experience, trusts in that experience, and makes a righteousness of it; whatever humble language he may use with respect to himself, and though he attribute his discoveries to the operations of divine grace, and even call upon others to glorify God for them. He who is proud of his experience, arrogates something to himself, as though his experience were a kind of dignity of his own. And if he regards it as conferring upon him a sort of importance, he believes that God views it in the same light; for he, of course, thinks his own judgment of it correct, and consequently supposes that God regards it as he does. And thus he trusts to what he himself possesses, to recommend him to God; and with this encouragement he goes before God in prayer, expecting much from him. This makes him think that Christ loves him, and that he has clothed him with the garment of salvation. This, in an eminent degree, is living on his own righteousness, and persons who thus live are in the high road to everlasting perdition. Deluded creatures! they think that they appear amiable in the eyes of God, when they are a smoke in his nose; and many of them, more odious than the most profligate persons who make no pretensions to religion!

There are professors who exclaim against legality, and talk much about faith as opposed to works; who exalt themselves as more evangelical in their sentiments than their brethren; but who are indeed among the greatest enemies of the doctrines of free grace, and the most dangerous opposers of pure Christianity.

There is a pretended humility,—a professed deadness to the law, which is one of the proudest things in the world. There are some persons who make great professions of having experienced a thorough work of the law on their hearts, and of being brought fully from dependence on their own works; whose conversation savours more of a self-righteous spirit, than that of any other description of persons with whom I have had an opportunity of being acquainted. And some who think themselves quite emptied of self, and abased in the dust, are as full as possible of pride: they are lifted up with a high opinion of their humility and self-abasement. Their humility, to use very improper terms, is a confident, showy, assuming humility. It appears to be the nature of spiritual pride, to make professors ostentatious with respect to this grace.

To be truly emptied of self,—to be poor in spirit,—to be broken in heart, is quite another thing, and has quite other effects from what many persons imagine. It is astonishing to observe, how many are deceived about themselves, as to this matter, imagining that they are very humble, when they are very proud, and their behaviour very haughty. The deceitfulness of the human heart appears in nothing so much, as in spiritual pride, and self-righteousness. The subtlety of Satan is most eminent in his management of persons as to these sins. Here perhaps he has most experience: he

is acquainted with the secret springs of pride: it was his own prevailing sin.

But though spiritual pride is so subtle, and in general appears under a pretext of great humility; yet there are two things by which it may be discovered, perhaps with certainty.

I. He who is under the prevalence of this spirit, in comparing himself with others, is apt to think highly of his own attainments in religion. It is natural for him to conceive of himself as an eminent saint, distinguished by great experience. "God, I thank thee," says he, "that I am not as other men," *Luke* xviii. 2. And, "I am holier than thou," *Isa.* lxv. 5. Hence such persons are apt to put themselves forward amongst the people of God, to take a high seat amongst them, *Luke* xiv. 7, &c. as if there was no doubt of its belonging to them. They are forward to take upon themselves the place and business of the chief: to teach, to direct, and to manage. They take it for granted that it belongs to them, to act the part of dictators; and they expect that others should look up to them, and yield to them, as masters in matters of religion.

But he whose heart is under the influence of humility, is of a contrary disposition. He is inclined to regard his attainments in religion as comparatively small, and to esteem himself as one of the least of the saints. True lowliness of mind, disposes persons to think others better than themselves, *Phil.* ii. 3. Hence it is that real Christians are apt to think that the lowest place belongs to them, *Luke* xiv. 10. They are not inclined to take upon themselves the office of teachers; but on the contrary, are disposed to think that others are fitter for it than they are. This was the case with Moses and Jeremiah, though they were em-

inent saints, *Exod* iii. 11, *Jer.* i. 6. Persons who are really humble, are more eager to hear, and to receive instruction, than to dictate to others. *James*, i. 19. And when they do speak, it is not with an arrogant, domineering air, but with humility and diffidence, *Hos.* xiii. 1. They do not assume authority, but are rather subject to others: "All *of you* be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility," 1 *Pet.* v. 5. See also *James* iii. 1. *Eph.* v. 21.

We may however speak of our experience as great and extraordinary in a proper spirit. Every degree of saving grace, is a great blessing, yea, infinitely great; and the more humble we are, trusting that God has bestowed such mercy upon us, the more shall we be disposed to entertain exalted ideas of the favour we have received. But if, by great experience, we mean that our experience is comparatively great, or excellent compared with what other Christians possess; it is the same thing as saying, we are eminent saints:—we have more grace than other persons. To have great experience in reality, is to have much grace, as there is no experience, but the exercise of grace; and exactly according to the degree of real experience, is the degree of grace and holiness. Those who are inclined to boast of their experience, expect that they should be admired. They do not regard this as a sign of spiritual pride, because their discoveries, they tell us, were not of themselves,—they were the effects of free grace,—and they only wish to acknowledge the great mercy of God towards them. In words, the Pharisee gave God the glory of making him to differ from other men: "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men:" Their ascribing it to the grace of God, that they are holier than others, is

no proof that the disposition of some professors to think highly of their holiness, does not arise from the pride and vanity of their minds. If they were under the influence of a humble spirit, their attainments in religion would not appear so brilliant in their own eyes Those who are really the most eminent saints, and therefore have the most satisfactory experience, and are greatest in the kingdom of heaven, humble themselves as little children. *Matt* xviii. 4. They regard themselves as little children in grace, and their attainments as those of babes in Christ. They are ashamed lhat they feel so little love and gratitude towards God, and have so little knowledge of him. Moses, when he had been conversing with God on the mount, and his face shone so bright as to dazzle the eyes of others, "wist not that his face shone."

Such is the nature of grace that it disposes the saints to regard their goodness as little, and their imperfections as great. Those who possess the most grace, possess likewise the most of this disposition. To a truly gracious person, his spiritual attainments will appear small in comparison with what they ought to be. Such a one looks to the rule of his duty; conformity to this is what his soul reaches after; and it is by this that he estimates what he does, and what he possesses.—To a gracious soul, and especially to one eminently gracious, his holiness appears little in comparison with the obligations under which he is laid. True spiritual light, presents to a person's view his obligation to be holy in the highest degree, and the more grace he possesses, the more clearly is this obligation presented to his view. As grace increases, this view extends itself until the soul is swallowed up by the vastness of the obligation, and astonished at the small degree in which this obligation is dis-

charged. Deeply affected by the smallness of his attainments, he can scarcely conceive that any thing similar has occurred in the experience of other saints. It is amazing to him, that a child of God,—one who has actually received the saving benefits of the unspeakable love of Christ, should love no more; and he is disposed to regard this circumstance as peculiar to himself, a strange and solitary instance of insensibility and ingratitude.

Here the reader may perhaps object, that love to God is really increased, in proportion as the knowledge of God is enlarged; and that therefore, how should an increase of knowledge make the love of a saint appear less to himself in comparison with what is known? To this I answer, that although grace, or the love of God in the saints, is in proportion to their knowledge of God; yet it bears no proportion to the majesty and glory of the object seen and known. A saint, by having something of God presented to his view, is convinced of much more than he sees. What is perceived is wonderful, but this view brings with it a strong conviction of something vastly superior to what is seen; so that the soul, at the same time, is astonished that it knows so little, as well as that it loves so little. And as the soul is convinced of the existence of infinitely more than it yet perceives, so it is convinced that it possesses a capacity of knowing vastly more than it yet knows. In consequence of this, it complains greatly of spiritual ignorance, and want of love; and longs and strives for more knowledge and more love.

Grace, or the love of God, in the most eminent saints in this world, is indeed small in comparison with what it ought to be. The most ardent love that is ever possessed in this life, is exceedingly

cold in comparison with our obligations. This appears from the consideration of two things;

First. The manifestations which God has made of his infinite love towards mankind; and

Secondly. The capacity which he has given us of understanding our obligations to love him. From these considerations, the love of the most eminent saint on earth, appears indeed cold in comparison with his obligations; and of this circumstance, grace, in proportion as it prevails, tends to convince him; for grace is of the nature of light, and presents truth to our view. He who is possessed of the greatest portion of grace, is the most clearly convinced of the height to which his affections should ascend, and is the most deeply affected with the low degree in which they are exercised. And therefore, estimating his love by the extent of his obligation, he is astonished at its smallness.

The eminent saint, having such a view of the high degree in which he ought to love God, perceives more clearly, not only the smallnes of his grace, but the greatness of his remaining corruption. In order to ascertain how much depravity, or sin remains within us, we must regard that height to which the rule of our duty extends; the whole of the distance between that elevation, and our affections is sin, for in exact proportion as we fall short of our duty, we sin, and evidence the depravity of our hearts. Sin is an abominable defect, and appears so to the saints, especially to those who are eminent saints.

An increase of grace leads us to regard our moral depravity as far greater than our holiness, as it exhibits the deformity existing in the least sin, or in the least degree of depravity The most inconsiderable sin against an infinite God, is infinitely hateful, and possesses infinite deformity; but the highest

degree of holiness in a creature is not infinitely lovely; and therefore that loveliness is as nothing, in comparison with the deformity of the least sin. That every sin possesses infinite deformity, and is infinitely hateful, may be easily demonstrated.—The evil, or malignity of sin, consists in its violating an obligation;—in our being what we ought not to be, or in our doing what we ought not to do; and therefore in proportion to the greatness of the obligation which is violated, is the magnitude of the guilt contracted. Again, our obligation to love and honour any being is in proportion to his loveliness, and worthiness to be honoured by us. If therefore a being is infinitely lovely, then our obligations to love him are infinitely great; and consequently whatever is contrary to this love possesses infinite deformity and iniquity. But on the other hand, there is not an infinite worthiness in our holiness, or love to God. The demerit, and hatefulness of our sins, are in proportion to the distance subsisting between us and God; but our unworthiness in his sight is in proportion to our meanness. As far as we are from God, morally considered, so far is our goodness unworthy of his notice. A great degree of superiority increases the obligation on the part of the inferior, and renders the violation of that obligation more hateful; but a great degree of inferiority diminishes the worth of the services rendered by an inferior, for a person can offer no more than himself, and therefore, if he is worthless, his services must also be worthless. And the more a person possesses of true grace and spiritual light, the more will he feel his infinite deformity as a sinner, and the want of moral beauty in his graces and experience. Indeed, our goodness, comparatively, is less than a drop in the ocean, for finite bears no proportion to infinite; and the more spiritual light we

possess, the more do things appear,in this respect, as they really are. Hence it is evident, that true grace is of such a nature, that the more a person possesses of it, the less does his moral beauty appear in comparison with his deformity.

The tendency of high religious affections, in some persons with whom I have been acquainted, is, to hide the depravity of their hearts, and to leave them without complaint as to the remains of moral depravity This is a certain proof that their discoveries, as they call them, proceed from darkness and not from light. It is true, that saving discoveries may, for the present, hide depravity, as they restrain its positive exercises. They do, however, bring it to light as to what is privative,—our want of love, of humility, of gratitude, &c. These defects appear most hateful in the view of those who are most eminently gracious; and whatever positive effects of depravity at any time appear, and mingle themselves with the actings of grace, they will, from these circumstances, be exceedingly magnified, and rendered far more detestable.

I would not, however, be understood to mean that the saints on earth have, in all respects, the worst opinion of themselves, when they possess most of the exercise of grace. In many respects the case is otherwise. As to the positive effects of depravity, it will be evident to the real Christian, that he is freest from them when grace is most in exercise, and least so when the actings of grace are most feeble. And when he compares his experience at one time, with his experience at another, he will be convinced that when grace is in lively exercise, it is better with him than when he is in a dull, and languid frame. When he sinks in the frame of his mind, he will be sensible of the de-

clension, and thus have a striking proof of his remaining depravity. But still it is evident from the considerations already mentioned, that the children of God never have such *spiritual* views of their deformity and vileness, as when they possess most of the exercise of true grace; and are never so much disposed to place themselves low amongst Christians, as when they are living near to God. Thus he who is greatest in the kingdom of Christ, is the least in his own estimation, *Matt.* xviii. 4.

A real saint, agreeably to what has been observed before, may know that he possesses true grace, and the more grace he possesses, the more easily may he arrive at this important knowledge. But still it does not follow, that an eminent saint is particularly sensible that he is an eminent saint compared with others. I will not deny that he who possesses much grace, and is eminently holy, may know that he is thus distinguished, but it will not be obvious to him that he is better than others, so that this supposition should become a foremost thought,—a something which, from time to time, readily occurs to his mind. It may be remarked as infallibly true,—*that the person, who, upon comparing himself with others, is apt to think himself a very eminent saint, much distinguished, in Christian experience; in whom this is a leading thought, often recurring, is certainly mistaken; he is no eminent saint, but under the prevalence of a proud, self-righteous spirit.* And if this is habitually the prevailing temper of his mind, he is no saint at all, and as certain as the word of God is true, he has not the least degree of true Christian experience.

That experience which puffs up with pride, is certainly false and delusive. Those discoveries which fill us with admiration of our supposed em-

inence and superiority, possess nothing of true spiritual light. The more a person has of real spiritual knowledge, the more is he sensible of his own ignorance, 1 *Cor.* viii. 2. Agur, when favoured with a clear discovery of the glory of God, had at the same time, a deep sense of his own ignorance, *Prov.* xxx. 2—4.

For a man to be proud of his spiritual knowledge, is the same as being wise in his own eyes, a state of mind forbidden in scripture, *Prov.* iii. 7, and *Rom.* xii. 16, and against which the following wo is pronounced: "Wo unto *them that are* wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight," *Isa.* v. 21. Those who are thus proud of their supposed knowledge, are the least likely to receive spiritual benefit from the means of grace. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? *there is* more hope of a fool than of him," *Prov.* xxvi. 12.

To this some persons may object that the Psalmist, when we must suppose he was in a holy frame, speaks of his knowledge as far greater than that of other saints: "I have more understanding than all my teachers; for thy testimonies *are* my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts," *Psa.* cxix. 99, 100. —To this I answer;

1. *First.* No restraint can be laid upon the Spirit of God, as to what he shall make known to a prophet for the benefit of the church. The Holy Spirit might reveal to David, the distinguishing benefit he had derived from meditation on the divine testimonies; and use him as an instrument to record it for the purpose of exciting others to the same duty, in order that they might obtain the same knowledge. Nothing can be inferred as to the tendency of the ordinary influence of the Spirit of

God, from what David, under extraordinary circumstances, here declares.

Secondly. It is not certain that the knowledge of which David here speaks, is that spiritual knowledge wherein holiness fundamentally consists. It might be that clearer revelation which God made to him respecting the Messiah, and what related to his future kingdom;—that extensive knowledge of the mysteries and doctrines of the gospel, which he possessed above others, and which was given him as a reward for his keeping the divine testimonies. In this knowledge it is evident, from the book of Psalms, that David excelled all the prophets who had gone before him.

II. Another infallible sign of spiritual pride, is a disposition to think highly of our humility. False experience is in general attended by counterfeit humility; and it is the very nature of this kind of humility, to be exceedingly proud of itself. But eminently gracious affections always possess a contrary tendency, and universally produce contrary effects. They make us very sensible what reason we have to be deeply humbled, and cause us earnestly to long for greater degrees of humility; they make our present attainments in this grace appear very small, and our remaining pride exceedingly great, and in the highest degree abominable.

The reason why a proud man is apt to consider his humility as great, and a humble man to consider his humility as very small, may be easily ascertained, if it is considered that persons, in judging of the degree of their own humility, take their measure from what they esteem their proper elevation or dignity. All men, in judging of their own, and the humility of others, consider the degree of dignity which belongs to them, and the degree of abasement to which they are reduced

below that dignity. The proud man compares his present abasement with that dignity which he conceives properly belongs to him, and the distance appears very great: hence it is that he admires his supposed humility. On the contrary, when he who is truly humbled is most abased, it does not appear to him that he is brought below his proper station, but rather that he is still above it: hence he is anxious that he may be more humbled. All that he conceives himself yet above his proper station, he calls pride; and therefore, in his view, it is his pride, and not his humility which appears great. Although he is now brought much lower than he used to be, his humiliation does not appear to him worthy of the name. He esteems himself so infinitely mean, that, though he has come down to a much lower place than what he used to assume, he is yet vastly higher than what is proper for him. He has so mean an opinion of his own proper dignity, that all his self-abasement, when considered in relation to that dignity, and compared with it, appears very small indeed.

Our humility is to be judged of by the degree of our abasement, when contrasted with our obligation to that abasement; but he who is truly humble, never, in this point of view, thinks his humility great. His obligations to be abased appear so great, and his actual abasement so small, that he takes far greater notice of his pride than of his humility.

Every one who has been much conversant with persons under convictions of sin, well knows that those who are deeply convinced of sin, are not apt to think that they are so. And the reason is this, they judge of the degree of their convictions by their sense of guilt and pollution, compared with what they conceive to be the degree of their real

sinfulness. It is no proof of deep convictions of guilt in some men to think themselves sinful beyond most others, because they really are so; and therefore a far slighter conviction may induce such individuals to form this conclusion, than would be required to produce a similar conviction in the minds of others. But he who is truly under deep convictions of sin, naturally thinks himself the chief of sinners. It appears to him that he has greater cause to be sensible of guilt and pollution than others have; and therefore he ascribes his convictions, not to the greatness of his spiritual sensibility, but to the number and magnitude of his transgressions. It is natural for one who is under convictions of sin, to think himself one of the greatest of sinners in reality, and that he is such, very evidently; and the deeper his convictions are, the more will he feel of this persuasion. That he is the chief of sinners, appears to himself so obvious, that he believes very slight convictions only are requisite in order to perceive it. That man is under deep convictions, whose convictions are deep in comparison with his sins; but no man who is truly under deep convictions, thinks his convictions deep in comparison with his sins. For whoever does, of course thinks his sins small; and wherever this is the case, it is certain that convictions of sin are slight. And this in reality is the principal reason why persons, when under a work of spiritual humiliation, are not sensible of it at the time.

As it is with convictions of guilt, so it is with convictions of meanness, ignorance, inability, &c. In the exercise of evangelical humiliation, the believer is never disposed to regard his sense of his own meanness as great, because it never appears so to him, considering his obligation to abasement.

An eminent saint is not disposed to think himself eminent in any thing; all his experience and graces appear to him comparatively small, especially his humility. There is nothing belonging to his experience so much out of his sight as this grace. He is far more ready in discerning his pride than his humility: he easily discovers the former, but scarcely perceives the latter. On the contrary, the deluded hypocrite under the influence of spiritual pride, is not so blind to any thing, as to his pride; nor so quick-sighted to any thing, as to his apparent humility.

The humble Christian is more disposed to find fault with his own pride, than with that of others. He is disposed to put the best construction on the words and behaviour of others, as they regard this spirit, and to think none so proud as himself. But the proud hypocrite is quick at discerning the mote in his brother's eye, while he perceives nothing of the beam that is in his own eye. He is very often exclaiming against the pride of others, finding fault with their apparel and way of living; and is much more affected with his neighbour's ring or ribband, than with all the filthiness of his own heart.

In consequence of the disposition of hypocrites to think highly of their abasement, counterfeit humility is always forward to present itself to view. Those who possess apparent humility are inclined to boast of it, and to make an exhibition of it in some affected singularity. So it was with the false prophets of old, *Zech.* xiii. 4, with the hypocritical Jews, *Isa.* lvii. 9, and with the Pharisees in particular, *Matt.* vi. 16. But it is quite otherwise with real humility; those who are truly self-abased, make no display of their humility; nor do they at all affect singularity in dress or manner:

"But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face," *Matt.* vi. 17. "Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship and humility," *Col.* ii. 23. Real humility is not noisy. A penitent, in the exercise of self-abasement, is represented as still and silent: "He sitteth alone, and keepeth silence," *Lam.* iii. 28. "If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, *lay* thine hand upon thy mouth," *Prov.* xxx. 32.

Thus have I been particular in describing the nature of that self-abasement which attends holy affections, as it leads persons to think meanly of their attainments, especially of their humility. I have also described the contrary tendency of spiritual pride. I have insisted the longer on this subject, because I regard it as a matter of great importance,—as pointing out a clear distinction between true and counterfeit humility.—This disposition of hypocrites to look upon themselves as better than others, is what God has declared to be very hateful to him: a smoke in his nose, *Isa.* lxv. 5. It is mentioned as showing the pride of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that they esteemed themselves as far better than the people of Sodom: "For thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thy mouth in the day of thy pride," *Ezek.* xvi. 56.

Reader, let these observations be applied to yourself. Though you admit it as a bad sign for a person to be apt to think himself better than others, there may still exist a strong prejudice in your own favour; and there may perhaps be need of great strictness of self-examination, in reference to your own state. If, on reading these observations, you are disposed to say, "It appears to me that none are so bad as I am," do not let the matter rest here, but examine again. Perhaps you think yourself better than others on this very ac-

count. Have you not a high opinion of your humility? Perhaps you will reply to this, "No, I have not a high opinion of my humility; it seems to me that I am as proud as Lucifer." Still, I say, examine again; self-exaltation may rest under this covering, and you may think yourself very humble, because, as you imagine, you think yourself very proud.

A truly humble person, having such a mean opinion of himself, is poor in spirit. He naturally behaves himself in many respects as a poor man: "The poor useth entreaties, but the rich answereth roughly." A poor man, in the company of the rich, is not resentful, not obstinate and self-willed; he is content with mean fare, and as he expects to be despised, he endures such treatment patiently; he is not offended that he is overlooked, or but little regarded, and is always prepared to take the lowest place; he receives reproof with meekness, and readily honours others as better than himself; he is willing to be taught, and claims no deference for his own understanding and judgment; he is not fastidious, assuming, or disposed to take much upon himself.

A man who is very poor, is usually a mendicant; so is he who is poor in spirit, exceedingly needy, and a beggar continually at the gates of divine mercy. False affections lead persons to esteem themselves rich, increased in goods, having need of nothing.

A poor man is modest in his language, and his behaviour; a man, poor in spirit, is much more so. It is in vain for any person to pretend that he is humble, and as a little child before God, when in his general behaviour, he is haughty, assuming and imperious.

The Apostle informs us that the design of the

gospel is to exclude all glorying, not only before God, but also before men. *Rom.* iv. 1, 2. Some persons make great pretensions to humility, who are very haughty and assuming in their behaviour: they ought to consider the following passages of scripture: "These six *things* doth the Lord hate; yea, seven *are* an abomination to him; a proud look," *&c. Prov.* vi. 16, 17. "Him that hath" a "high look, and a proud heart, will not I suffer," *Psa.* ci. 5. The scriptures speak of a kind of amiable modesty, arising from humility, which adorns the Christian character: "*Be* ready to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear," 1 *Pet.* iii. 15. "With fear and trembling you received him," 2 *Cor.* vii. 15. In this respect a Christian is like a little child, diffident and modest.

The same spirit will dispose a Christian to honour all men. A humble believer is not only disposed to show respect to the saints, but to others also, as far as he can, without giving countenance to their sins. Thus Abraham, the great pattern of believers, honoured the children of Heth: "And Abraham bowed himself down before the people of the land," *Gen.* xxiii. 12. This was a remarkable instance of humble behaviour towards those whom Abraham knew to be accursed, and from among whom, therefore, he would by no means suffer his servant to take a wife for his son.* So Paul honoured Festus: "I am not mad, most noble Festus," *Acts*, xxvi. 25. Christian humility will not only dispose us to honour those wicked men who are out of the visible church, but also false brethren and persecutors. Jacob, having been wrestling all night with God, and having re-

* Esau's wives, being of these children of Heth, were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah.

ceived the blessing of Jehovah, honoured Esau, his false and persecuting brother: Jacob "bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother Esau," *Gen.* xxxiii. 3. He called him lord, and commanded all his family to honour him in the same manner.

Thus have I endeavoured to describe, according to scripture, the disposition and behaviour of one who is governed by a truly gracious humility. Now it is from such a disposition as this, that all truly holy affections flow. True Christian love, both to God and to men, is a humble love; the desires of the saints, however earnest, are humble desires; their hope is a humble hope; and their joy, even when it is unspeakable, and full of glory, is a humble joy. The real Christian, under the influence of a spirit of humility, becomes more and more like a little child; and more and more disposed to universal lowliness of behaviour.

VII. Gracious affections are attended by a change of nature or disposition.

According to what has been already shown, all gracious affections arise from the understanding being spiritually enlightened, as to the excellency and glory of divine things. But all spiritual discoveries are transforming, and not only produce a change in its present sensations and exercises, but in the moral state of the soul: "But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 *Cor.* iii. 18. This power is peculiar to "the Spirit of the Lord." Through the influence of other agents, our present feelings may be altered, but it is only by the gracious operations of the Creator that our dispositions can be really changed. No discove-

ries or illuminations, but those which are supernatural and divine, will produce this effect.

The scriptures, speaking of conversion, use terms which strongly imply, or very clearly express a change of nature or disposition: they speak of our being born again; becoming new creatures; being renewed in the spirit of the mind; dying to sin, and living to righteousness; putting off the old man, and putting on the new man; of being grafted into a new stock; of being made partakers of the divine nature, &c.

If, therefore, there is no great and abiding change in persons who profess to have experienced the work of conversion, they are certainly deceived. Conversion, if we ought to give any credit to scripture, is a universal change of disposition, a real turning of the soul from sin unto God. A man may be restrained from sin, before he is converted; but, having experienced that gracious change, he is not only restrained from sin, but made to hate it. If, therefore, the high affections of the supposed convert have so declined, that there is now no remarkable alteration in him, and he is in general under the prevailing influence of the same dispositions as before; if he appears as selfish and carnal, as lukewarm and anti christian as ever; these circumstances afford such powerful evidence against him, that the finest story about experience that could possibly be told, would be regarded by the judicious Christian as possessing no value. For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision, nor uncircumcision; neither a forward profession, nor a diffident one; neither a fine story about experience, nor a poor one, avails any thing; but only a new creature.

If, for a time, there seems to be a great change in any particular person, but that change after-

wards disappears, it is evident that there has been no change of nature or disposition. A swine may be washed, but its swinish nature will still remain.

Allowance must be made for natural temper; conversion does not completely eradicate constitutional peculiarities; those sins to which a man was naturally most inclined before his conversion, will be most likely to ensnare him afterwards. Yet conversion effects a great change, even with respect to constitutional propensities; and though grace, whilst we are in this world, does not entirely destroy, yet, in a great measure, it corrects or subdues, bad natural tempers. The change wrought in conversion is universal, having respect to whatever is sinful; the old man is put off, the new man is put on. The subject of this change is sanctified throughout; he is made a new creature, old things are passed away, and all things are become new; all sin is mortified, constitutional sins as well as others. If a man, before his conversion, was, by his natural constitution, strongly inclined to any particular sin, converting grace will make a great change in him with respect to that propensity, so that, though he may be still most in danger from that particular sin, it will no longer have dominion over him; nor will it in future be that from which he properly takes his character. True repentance, in some respects, turns a man more particularly against those sins by which he has most dishonoured God. He who discards other sins, but retains that to which he is constitutionally inclined, is like Saul when sent against the enemies of God, the Amalekites, with a strict charge to save none of them alive, but utterly to destroy them, small and great. He destroyed the people, but saved the king.

Some persons foolishly argue that their religious

affections are gracious, because when they subside, no spiritual life is experienced. They think it is evident that what they experience is wholly of God, "because," say they, "when God is departed, we see and feel nothing spiritually, and are no better than we used to be." It is true that all the grace possessed by the saints, is derived entirely and immediately from God; but those persons are mistaken, as to the manner in which he communicates his Holy Spirit, and imparts saving grace to the soul. He gives his Spirit to be united to the faculties of the soul, and to dwell there as a principle of spiritual life and activity; so that the mind, thus endued with grace, is possessed of a new nature, or holy disposition. The saints do not only drink of the water that flows from the fountain of life; but this water becomes in them a fountain springing up there, and flowing from thence, *John* iv. 14. vii. 38, 39. Grace is compared to a seed not only sown in the ground, but as having root and growing there.

As it is with spiritual discoveries and affections at conversion, so it is with all illuminations and affections afterwards: they are all transforming. They continue to possess the same energy as at the first; and they penetrate, and affect, and alter the very disposition of the soul, in proportion to the degree in which they are communicated. A transformation of disposition, is carried on by divine grace to the end of life, until it is made perfect in everlasting glory. Hence the progress of this work, is represented in scripture, as a continued conversion, or renovation of nature. The Apostle Paul exhorts the saints at Rome, to be transformed by the renewing of their minds, *Rom.* xii. 1, 2. And in writing to the faithful in Christ Jesus at Ephesus, he tells them, that he ceased

not to pray for them, that God would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ; the eyes of their understandings being opened, that they might know, or experience, what was the exceeding greatness of the power of God towards them that believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, *Eph.* i. 16, &c. In this passage the Apostle has respect to the power of God in converting and renewing the soul. He also exhorts the same persons to put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and to be renewed, in the spirit of their minds; and to put on the new man, who after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, *Eph.* iv. 22—24.

There is a kind of high affection which some persons experience, which afterwards leaves them without the appearance of any abiding effect. The impression passes away, so that a degree of rapture is soon exchanged for spiritual languor and inactivity. It is not thus with high gracious affections; they leave a sweet savour and relish of divine things, and a stronger bent of soul towards God and holiness. The face of Moses not only shone while he was on the Mount, conversing with God, but it continued to shine after he had come down. When men have been conversing with Christ, the evidence of this intercourse remains on them; there is something remarkable in their dispositions and frame of mind, which shows that they have been with Jesus, *Acts* iv. 13.

VIII. Gracious affections are attended by the same spirit and temper which were manifested by Jesus Christ.

If we judge of the nature of Christianity, by the word of God, this spirit and temper must be regarded as forming the true, and distinguishing disposition of all real Christians; it is the spirit by which they are so governed that they take from it their proper character, and denomination This is evident from the description which Christ gives of the temper of those who are truly blessed: "Blessed *are* the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed *are* the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed *are* the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God," *Matt.* v. 5, 7, 9. This is the spirit by which the elect are distinguished: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another," *Col.* iii. 12, 13. The Apostle, speaking of that temper or disposition, without which none are true Christians, describes it thus; "Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not: charity vaunteth not itself, is not" easily "puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil," 1 *Cor.* xiii. 4, 5. Describing the characteristic marks of true Christian grace, the same Apostle chiefly insists upon what belongs to such a spirit and temper as those of which I am speaking: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," *Gal.* v. 22, 23. The Apostle James, speaking of that wisdom which is from above, says, "If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife" are, "there *is* confusion, and every evil work.

But the wisdom" which " is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits," *James* iii. 14—17.

Every thing that belongs to holiness of heart, belongs also to the nature of true religion ; but the spirit of holiness, as appearing in some particular graces, may more especially be called the Christian spirit or temper. There are some virtues which, in a peculiar manner, agree with the nature and design of the gospel constitution ; and which were more particularly exercised by Jesus Christ in the work of redemption. These virtues are humility, meekness, love, forgiveness and mercy: they therefore belong, in a very special manner, to the Christian character.

These virtues are represented as forming the character of Christ himself, the great Head of the Christian Church; " Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold thy King cometh unto thee, meek and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass," *Matt.* xxi. 5. " Learn of me," said the Redeemer himself, " for I am meek and lowly in heart." This temper is also evidently implied in the name by which Christ is so often called in scripture—THE LAMB. And as these virtues are especially characteristic of Christ, so they are also characteristic of Christians. Christians are Christ-like. None deserve to bear the name, who do not exhibit the likeness of Christ: the new man is renewed, after the image of him that creates him, *Col* iii 10. The elect were predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Son of God, that he might be the first-born among many brethren, *Rom.* viii. 29. Christ is full of grace, and all Christians receive of his fullness, grace for grace: there is grace in Christians answering to grace in Christ,

such a correspondence as there is between the wax and the seal, the same kind of graces, and such a spirit and temper. Christians who shine by reflecting the light of the Sun of Righteousness, shine with the same kind of brightness, the same mild, benignant beams. Those lamps of the spiritual temple, which are kindled by fire from heaven, burn with the same kind of flame. It would be strange if Christians were not of the same temper and spirit as Christ, when they live so that it is not they that live, but Christ that liveth in them. A Christian spirit is the mark which Christ sets upon the souls of his people; his seal in their foreheads, bearing his image and superscription. Christians are followers, or imitators of Christ, and they are so in proportion as they learn of him, who is meek and lowly of heart. True Christians are distinguished by the meek and loving temper of Christ; for as many as are in Christ, have put on Christ. *Rom.* xiii. 14. The church is not only clothed with his righteousness, but also adorned with his graces.

That the virtue here spoken of, is of the very nature of the Christian spirit, is evident from this —the dove is the symbol chosen of God to represent it. The Spirit that descended on Christ, when he was anointed of the Father, descended on him "like a dove." Now the dove is an emblem of meekness, innocence, peace and love. But the same Spirit that descended on Christ, the Head of the church, descends also on the members: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." *Rom.* viii. 6.

Meekness is so much the character of the saints, that the words *meek* and *godly*, are used in scripture as synonimous terms. The wicked and the meek are set in opposition to each other. "Yet

a little while and the wicked shall not be ;—but the meek shall inherit the earth," *Psa.* xxxvii. 11. "The Lord lifteth up the meek ; he casteth the wicked down to the ground." *Psa.* cxlvii. 6.

It is without doubt principally on this account, that Christ represents the heirs of heaven as little children: "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven," *Matt.* xix. 14. Little children are meek, and though irritated, their anger is of short continuance. They do not cherish resentment, or entertain deep-rooted malice. They are ingenuous and sincere ; strangers to all disguise. They are pliant, diffident of their own understanding, relying on the instructions of their parents and teachers. They present therefore a fit emblem of the followers of the Lamb.

But here some may be ready to inquire, Is there then no such thing as Christian intrepidity or fortitude? To this I reply, there doubtless is. The whole of a Christian's life is very properly compared to a warfare. The most eminent Christians are the best soldiers, endued with the greatest degree of Christian courage. Many persons appear to be mistaken as to the nature of Christian courage. It is very different from brutal fierceness. It consists in strength of mind exerted through grace:

First, in ruling and subduing our evil passions ; and

Secondly, in steadfastly exercising holy dispositions, without regarding opposition. But the passions which are restrained in the exercise of Christian courage are those very passions which are vigorously exerted in unsanctified boldness ; and those affections which are vigorously exerted in holy intrepidity, are in direct opposition to the

unhallowed passions of carnal men. Though Christian courage is exerted in opposing the enemies which are without us, yet it is chiefly exerted in opposing those which are within us. The fortitude of a good soldier of Jesus Christ, appears in nothing more than in steadfastly maintaining a holy calmness, meekness and benevolence of mind, amidst all the injurious behaviour of this prejudiced and persecuting world. "He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." *Prov.* xvi. 33.

The most certain way of forming a right judgment as to the nature of holy fortitude, is to look to the Captain of the host of God, our great leader and example, and observe wherein his courage and fortitude appeared, when he obtained that glorious victory, which will be celebrated in the praises and triumphs of the hosts of heaven, throughout eternity. He did not give vent to angry passions, or vehement declamations against his persecutors; he opened not his mouth, when oppressed; he went as a lamb to the slaughter, praying that his Father would forgive his enemies, because they knew not what they did. When one of his disciples, who professed great zeal and boldness for his Master, declaring that he would sooner die with him, than deny him, began to use his sword, he meekly rebuked him, and healed the wound which had been given. If therefore we see any of the followers of Christ, in the midst of the most violent, unreasonable and wicked opposition, maintaining the humility and gentleness of the Lamb, in union with the harmlessness and affection of the dove, we may at once conclude that they are good soldiers of Jesus Christ. When persons are fierce, and express violent passions, they manifest weakness rather than fortitude.

There is a kind of boldness which arises from pride. From this principle a man may be forward to expose himself to the dislike of the world, and even to provoke its opposition. It is the nature of spiritual pride to affect singularity, and to court distinction. Proud professors often place themselves in a state of warfare with those whom they call carnal, that they may be more highly esteemed among their own party. True Christian fortitude is universal, bearing us above the displeasure of friends, as well as of enemies, so that influenced by this spirit, if called to make the sacrifice, we should forsake all rather than Christ. That duty which ascertains whether a man is willing to be despised by his own party, is a much more proper test of his religious fortitude, than his being forward to expose himself to the reproach of enemies. The Apostle sought not glory either of the Heathens, or of the Jews, or of the Christians, 1 *Thess.* ii. 6. He is bold for Christ, who has fortitude enough to confess his fault openly, even before his opposers, when he has committed one that requires such confession. Such conduct as this is a far more decisive evidence of holy courage, than resolutely and fiercely opposing our enemies.

As some persons are mistaken respecting the nature of Christian courage, so are they as to the nature of evangelical zeal. It is indeed a flame, but it is a mild one; or rather it is the heat and fervour of divine love, or Christian charity; the most benevolent principle that can exist in the heart of man, or of angel. It ardently and vigorously flows out towards its object; and so of course, in opposition to whatever is contrary to that object. It stimulates indeed to vigorous opposition, but it is rather against sin, than sinners. Bitterness

against the persons of men, is no part of its nature, but quite the contrary; for so much the warmer our zeal is and the higher it is raised, so much the further are we from such a spirit as this, and so much the more are we filled with love, both to the evil and to the good. This appears from what has just now been observed, that its very nature and essence is the fervour of Christian love. And as to what opposition it possesses to sin, it is primarily and chiefly against the iniquity of our own hearts. There is therefore nothing in true Christian zeal, contrary to that spirit of meekness, gentleness and love;—that spirit of a little child, which has been spoken of; but on the contrary, every thing perfectly agreeable to its nature, and tending to promote its increase.

But in speaking more particularly upon the Christian temper and spirit, I would observe that the scriptures very clearly and expressly enforce the absolute necessity of mercy, forgiveness and love, as exercises belonging essentially to the disposition and character of every Christian.

The scriptures are as decisive as possible in asserting that none are true saints, but those who are of a disposition to pity and relieve the indigent, and afflicted: "The righteous showeth mercy, and giveth," *Psa.* xxxvii. 21. "*He is* ever merciful and lendeth," ver. 26. "He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor," *Psa.* cxii. 9. "He judged the cause of the poor and needy:—*was* not this to know me? saith the Lord," *Jer.* xxii. 16. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction," &c. *James* i. 27. "Blessed *are* the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy," *Matt.* v. 7. For he shall have judgment, without mercy, that hath showed no mercy.—What *doth it* profit, my

brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? If a brother or a sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say—"Depart in peace, be *you* warmed and filled," though "ye give not" him "those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" *Jas.* ii. 13—16. "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" 1 *John*, iii. 17. Christ, in the description of the day of judgment, represents the different sentences as being passed, accordingly as men have been merciful or otherwise. His design in giving this description, is evidently to impress our minds with a conviction that, unless this is our spirit and practice, we can have no hope of being owned and accepted by him at that day. In scripture, the terms, a righteous man, and a merciful man, are synonymous expressions: "The righteous perisheth and no man layeth *it* to heart; and merciful men *are* taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil *to come*," *Isa.* lvii. 1.

As to a forgiving spirit, or a disposition to overlook injuries, Christ urges its importance both negatively and positively. He expressly declares that if we are of such a spirit, it is an evidence that our sins are forgiven; and that if we are not of such a spirit, it is a proof that they are not forgiven. He seems to take special care that we should notice this, and always bear it in our minds: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," is the petition which he taught his disciples; and then he adds, "For, if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses,

neither will your Father forgive your trespasses," *Matt.* vi. 12, 14, 15.

That all true saints are of a loving, benevolent disposition, the scriptures abundantly affirm. Without this, the Apostle tells us, though we should speak with the tongues of men and of angels, we are as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal; and though we have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, we are nothing. This disposition is very often mentioned in the New Testament as a distinguishing characteristic of the disciples of Christ, and that by which they may be known to be such, both to themselves, and by others. Christ calls the law of love, by way of eminence, *his* commandment: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another," *John* xiii. 34. "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." *John* xv. 12. "By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another," *John* xiii 35. The beloved disciple, who had so much of this temper himself, abundantly insists upon its importance. None of the sacred writers are so express in reference to the evidence of grace as he is; and he insists scarcely upon any evidence of grace, but a spirit of Christian love, and a corresponding practice: "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him," 1 *John*, ii. 9, 10. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not *his* brother, abideth in death," chap. iii. 14. See also verses 18, 19, 23, 24 — "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of

God, and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love," chap. iv.7,8. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us.—Hereby we know that we dwell in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.—If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" verses 12, 13, 16, 20.

Hence it is abundantly evident from scripture, that those who are truly gracious, are under the government of the meek and benevolent spirit of Jesus Christ; and that this disposition is essential to the nature of saving grace, and is the proper spirit of true Christianity. We may therefore conclude, without hesitation, that all truly Christian affections are attended by such a spirit; and that this is the natural tendency of the fear and the hope, the sorrow and the joy, the confidence and the zeal of every true Christian.

Let no one conclude, however, that true Christians have no remains of a contrary spirit, and that they never, in any instance, act contrary to such a disposition. But I do affirm, that every thing belonging to true religion, is of this tendency; and that there is no true Christian but who is so under the prevailing power of such a spirit, that he is properly denominated from it, and that it really forms his character. Ministers and others, have therefore no warrant to encourage persons of a contrary character and behaviour, to think that they are converted, because they tell a plausible story about illuminations and discoveries. Some place religion so much in illuminations, and certain transient impressions, and so little in the prevailing spirit and

temper, that they greatly misrepresent it, and exhibit Christianity as if it were quite different from what it is, as delineated in the sacred writings.—The scriptures know nothing of selfish, ill tempered and contentious Christians. A greater absurdity cannot be thought of than a morose, hard-hearted, covetous, proud, malicious Christian. We should endeavour to bring men to the rules of the word of God, and not so to stretch those rules, in order to include ourselves, and our friends, as to make them of no effect.

It is true that allowances must be made for natural temper, but not such allowances as admit that those who were wolves and serpents, are now converted, while there is no remarkable change in their spirit and dispositions. The change made by conversion, is in general most remarkable, with respect to that sin to which the person was most addicted. Grace has as great a tendency to restrain and mortify those sins which are contrary to the spirit mentioned above, as it has to mortify drunkenness or lasciviousness. The scriptures represent the change wrought by the gospel, as appearing more particularly in a change of spirit and temper: "The wolf—shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed. their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," *Isa* xi 6—9. See also *Isa.* lxv. 25. Accordingly we find, that in the primi-

tive church, converts were remarkably changed in this respect: "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared,—not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost," *Tit.* iii. 4, 5. "In—which ye also walked;—but now you also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth," *Col* iii. 7, 8.

IX. Gracious affections soften the heart, and are accompanied by a Christian tenderness of spirit.

False affections, however they may seem at first to improve the disposition, have, in the end, a tendency to harden the heart; and the consequence is, the persons thus deluded, become less affected by their sins, and less circumspect in their conduct; less moved by the warnings and cautions of the word of God, and less susceptible of benefit from the chastisements of his providence than they were while under legal awakenings, and the fear of hell. They have felt certain impressions and affections, have a high opinion of themselves, and consider their state as being quite safe; and therefore they are now much more easy than they were before, in the neglect of such duties as are troublesome and inconvenient. They are not so alarmed at their own defects and transgressions, and are more liable to yield to temptation. They are now less attentive to their behaviour in the holy presence of God, in the time of public or private worship.—Formerly, perhaps under legal

convictions, they took much pains in religion, and denied themselves many gratifications; but now, thinking themselves out of the danger of hell, they are more disposed to avoid the cross, and save themselves the trouble of performing difficult duties.

Such persons as these, instead of embracing Christ as the Saviour *from* their sins, trust him as the Saviour *of* their sins; instead of fleeing to him as the *refuge* FROM their spiritual enemies, they make use of him as a *defence* OF those enemies. They make Christ the minister of sin, and trust in him to preserve them in the quiet enjoyment of their unholy gratifications. Thus they take the place of the children of God, even his bosom, and fight against him with weapons hid under his skirts. The Apostle Jude speaks of some who crept in among the saints, professing to trust in Christ, but who were in reality ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, *Jude*, 4.

Gracious affections possess a quite different tendency; they gradually turn a heart of stone into a heart of flesh. They flow from a contrite spirit. The tenderness of heart essential to a true Christian, is well represented by our Saviour when he compares such a one to a little child. The affections of a child are easily moved. It is fearful and diffident, pliant and compassionate.

Hence gracious affections do not tend to make persons forward and noisy, but rather the contrary. Real Christians are disposed to clothe with a kind of holy fear, all their behaviour towards God and towards man. *Psa.* ii. 11. 1 *Pet.* iii. 15. 2 *Cor.* vii. 15. *Eph.* vi. 5. 1 *Pet.* iii. 2. *Rom.* xi 20.

But some may ask, is there no such thing then as holy confidence in prayer, and in the other duties of divine worship? I answer there undoubtedly is, and it is chiefly to be found in eminent

saints, possessing a high degree of faith and love. But this holy confidence is not at all opposed to reverence. It removes or lessens that distance which arises from moral causes, or alienation of heart; it also removes the distance of relation, so that slaves now become children; but it does not at all lessen that reverential distance, which, in the nature of things, necessarily exists between the Creator and the creature Confidence in the sinner, possessing a proper view of God, and of himself, will not induce him to approach his Maker with less fear and reverence than the angels in heaven do, who cover their faces before his throne, *Isa.* vi. 2. Elijah, that great prophet, who enjoyed so much holy familiarity with God, when conversing with him on the mount, wrapped his face in his mantle. It was not from servile dread, occasioned by the terrible wind, and earthquake, and fire, that he thus acted; for these had ceased, and God then spoke to him as a friend, "in a still small voice," 1 *Kings*, xix. 12, 13. And Moses, with whom God spake face to face, as a man speaks with his friend, and who was distinguished above all the other prophets by the familiarity to which he was admitted, at a time when he enjoyed the greatest nearness to God, "made haste," it is said, "and bowed his head towards the earth, and worshipped." *Exod.* xxxiv. 8.

There is a most improper, and impudent boldness, in the addresses of some persons to the great JEHOVAH; from the very idea of which they would shrink with confusion and horror, were they sensible of the natural and moral distance subsisting between God and themselves. They are like the Pharisee, who drew near boldly, in confidence of his own eminence in holiness; whereas, if they were sensible of their vileness, they would act

more like the Publican, who "stood afar off, and durst not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven; but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." It becomes such sinful creatures as we are, to approach a holy God, although with faith and without terror, yet with contrition, penitence and confusion of face. It was foretold that this should be the disposition of the church, in her latter-day glory, when God should afford her remarkable comfort, by the revelation of his covenant mercy to her: "I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. Then shalt thou remember thy ways, and be ashamed.—And I will establish my covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord; that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God," *Ezek.* xvi. 60, &c. The woman of whom we read in the seventh chapter of Luke, who, according to the testimony of the Redeemer himself, had much of that love which casteth out fear, approached Christ in an acceptable manner, when she came with modesty, reverence and shame, and when she stood at his feet, weeping behind him, as not being fit to appear before him, washing his feet with her tears.

One reason why gracious affections are accompanied by this tenderness of spirit, is this,—true grace promotes convictions of conscience. Convictions are usually the first work of the Holy Spirit, and after conversion succeeds joy and peace in believing. This experience has a tendency to put an end to terror, though it rather increases than diminishes convictions. It does not stupify conscience, but renders it more sensible of the heinous and dreadful nature of sin. Grace tends

to give the mind a clearer conception of the same things respecting sin, of which it was convinced under the first workings of the Holy Spirit; that is, its direct opposition to the will and honour of God, his utter detestation of it, and the dreadful punishment it deserves, and to which it leads the finally impenitent. And not only so, but it convinces the mind of the infinitely hateful nature of sin, a circumstance of which it saw nothing, while under legal convictions. The heart of a true penitent is like a burnt child, it dreads the fire; whereas, on the contrary, he who has had only a counterfeit experience, is like iron, which having been heated, and then suddenly quenched, becomes much harder than before. False conversions put an end to convictions of conscience, and so either remove, or greatly diminish, that tenderness of spirit which was manifested under legal convictions.

All gracious affections promote this Christian tenderness, or sensibility. It is promoted not only by godly sorrow, but by evangelical joy: "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling," *Psa.* ii. 11. Gracious hope has likewise the same tendency: "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy," *Psa.* cxlvii. 11. Indeed the more there is of this hope, the more there is also of this holy sensibility of soul. The more servile fear is banished by evangelical confidence, the more is reverential fear promoted. In proportion as the fear of the displeasure of God in future punishment is decreased, in the same proportion will the fear of his displeasure itself be decreased; and as the fear of hell is diminished, in the same degree will the fear of sin be augmented. The removal of doubts, as to our state, is attended by a proportionate in-

crease of holy jealousy, as to our own hearts, our own strength, our own wisdom, &c. The less we are afraid of natural evil, the more we are likely to be afraid of moral evil, or the evil of sin. The more we have of holy boldness, the less have we of self confidence. As we are delivered from the fear of hell, we are, in the same degree, made sensible of having deserved it. The less liable are we to be shaken in faith, the more easily are we moved by the solemn warnings of God, and by the calamities of others.

X. Gracious affections possess a beautiful symmetry.

Not that this symmetry is perfect in the present life; it is often defective in many things, through the imperfection of grace, for want of proper instruction, or through some particular unhappiness of natural temper. But still there is never that monstrous disproportion in the gracious affections, and the various parts of true religion in the saints, which is very often observable in the counterfeit graces, and false religion of hypocrites.

The holy affections of the saints possess that proportion, which is the natural consequence of the universality of the work of sanctification. They have the whole image of Christ upon them; they have put off the old man, and have put on the new man, in all his parts and members. It hath pleased the Father that in Christ all fulness should dwell; there is in him every grace, and they who are his receive of his fulness, grace for grace. *John*, i. 14, 16. There is every grace in them which is in Christ; grace answering to grace; the same beautiful proportion which is in the original,—feature for feature,—member for

member. The natural body consists of many members, all in beautiful proportion; so it is in the new man, consisting of various graces and affections. The body of one who was born a perfect child, may fail of exact proportion through distemper; yet the disproportion is by no means like that of those who are born monsters.—It is with hypocrites as it was with Ephraim of old:—"Ephraim is a cake not turned," half baked and half dough —there is no uniformity in their affections.

There is in many hypocrites a great disproportion as to the several kinds of religious affections. —Holy hope and holy fear are united in the saints. See *Psa.* xxxiii. 18, cxlvii 11. But hypocrites have the firmest confidence, while they are void of reverence, self-diffidence and caution. The joy of the saints, however great, is invariably attended by holy fear The disciples on the morning of the resurrection of Christ, "departed quickly from the sepulchre, with fear and GREAT joy," *Matt.* xxviii 8 But hypocrites rejoice without trembling; their joy is directly opposite to godly fear.

One great difference between the saints and hypocrites is this,—the joy and comfort of the former is attended by godly sorrow and mourning for sin. They have not only sorrow to prepare them for their first comfort, but it continues with them after their joy is established. Although Christ hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, so that true believers are freed from the sorrow of everlasting punishment, and may appropriate the consolation which he has provided; yet this does not prevent their joy from being attended by the sorrow of repentance. Real saints are represented in scripture, not only as those who *have* mourned, but as those who *still* mourn for sin.

Not only is there often in hypocrites an essen-

tial deficiency, as to some kinds of religious affections; but also a strange disproportion, in the same affections, with regard to different objects.

Some make a great show of love to God, and perhaps have been much affected by what they have heard or thought respecting him; but they have not a spirit of love and benevolence towards men; they are disposed to envy, evil speaking, contention and revenge; and are not very strict and conscientious in observing the commandment of doing to others, as they would that others should do to them: If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar," 1 *John*, iv. 10 And on the other hand, there are some who appear as if they had a great deal of benevolence to men, who have no love to God.

Again, there are some who have strong affections for particular persons; but their love is far from being so extensive and universal, as truly Christian love is. They are warm in their affections for some, while they are bitter in their enmity against others. They are closely attached to their own party, to those who admire and love them,but are fierce against those that oppose them. "Be ye like unto your Father" who " is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good.--For if ye love them that love you, what reward have you? do not even the publicans the same?" *Matt.* v. 45, 46. Some evidence great affection for their neighbours, and are enraptured with the company of the children of God abroad; while, at the same time, they are churlish towards their wives and their other domestics, and are very negligent of relative duties.

As there is a monstrous disproportion in the love of some professors, in its exercise towards different persons, so there is in its exercise to-

wards the same persons, at different times. Some persons evidence great love to men, as it respects their temporal welfare, but appear to have no concern for their spiritual and everlasting happiness. Others, on the contrary, pretend to have great love for the souls of men, while they have no concern for their temporal comfort. The appearance of great concern for the souls of men costs nothing; but in order to promote their temporal ease and comfort, it is necessary to part with money. But true Christian love to the brethren extends both to their spiritual and temporal interests; and in this it resembles the love and compassion of Jesus Christ. He showed mercy to the souls of men by preaching the gospel to them, and to their bodies by going about doing good, healing all manner of sickness and disease among the people. We have a remarkable instance of his compassion to the souls, and the bodies of men, shown to the same individuals: "And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things, *Mark*, vi 34, &c In the sequel, we have an account of his compassion to their bodies. They had been a long time without food, and he fed five thousand of them with five loaves and two fishes.—Now if the compassion of professing Christians, does not operate in the same ways, it is evidently not true Christian compassion.

Further, it is an evidence that our affections are not evangelical, if we appear to feel much for the imperfections of our fellow professors, as their lukewarmness, &c. but are in no proportion sensible of our own. A real Christian may be affected by the lukewarmness of other saints, and may

mourn over it; but at the same time he will not feel so much for the imperfections of others, as for those of his own. The latter are most in view, and of those he is most ready to complain. A less degree of spiritual influence will lead a person to pity himself, than what would induce him rightly to feel the calamities of others; and if men have not the inferior degree of gracious influence, we may at once infer, that they do not possess the greater.

And here I would observe,—and the observation may be regarded as a general criterion,—That if persons pretend to high attainments in religion, but do not appear to have arrived at certain lower attainments, it is an evidence that their profession is of no value. For example, if they profess to be greatly affected by the wickedness of their own hearts, but are not affected by the obvious violations of the commands of God in their practice; or if they profess to venture their souls upon Christ, trusting the faithfulness of God in his promises, for their eternal welfare; but at the same time have not confidence enough to trust him with a small part of their property, devoted to pious and charitable purposes;—under these circumstances, their professions are manifestly of no value.

What has been observed of the affection of love, may be also observed of all the other affections, in their reference to religion. When they are genuine, they extend, in a proportionate degree, to all the various things which form their proper objects; but when they are spurious, they are in general strangely disproportionate. It is thus with religious desires; in the saints, they have respect to all those things in general which are spiritual and excellent, and that in proportion to their

excellency or importance; but in false professors, the case is often quite otherwise. The latter pursue with impatient vehemence, something of small importance, while they treat with coldness and indifference, other things of far greater consequence. Thus, for instance, some persons have a strong inclination to declare to others what they experience, and perhaps to exhort them; while at the same time they possess no proportionate inclination to other duties, to which true religion has even a more powerful tendency; such as pouring out the soul before God in earnest, secret prayer and thanksgiving.

As to hatred and zeal, when they spring from right principles, they are exercised against all kinds of sin in proportion to the degree of their turpitude: "I hate every false way," *Psa.* cxix. 104. But false hatred and zeal against sin, are exercised against some particular sins only. Thus some persons are very zealous against profaneness, and pride in dress, who themselves are notorious for covetousness, and perhaps for backbiting, envy, turbulence of spirit, and hatred towards those who have injured them. False zeal is exercised against the sins of others only; but truly Christian zeal, chiefly against our own. Some profess to abhor their own sins of heart, and exclaim much against their inward corruption; and yet make light of sins in practice, and seem to commit them without much restraint or remorse.

As there is a much greater disproportion in the exercises of false religious affections, than of true ones, as to different objects, so there is also as to different times. For although true Christians are not always alike, yet there is not that instability in them, as in false professors. The righteous man is said to be one whose heart is fixed, trust-

ing in God; to have his heart established with grace; and to hold on his way, *Psa.* cxii. 7. *Heb.* xiii. 9. *Job*, xvii. 9. If therefore persons are religious only by fits, it is evident that their religious affections are unsound. They are like certain waters, which in the time of a shower flow abundantly, but are afterwards soon dry. A real saint on the contrary, is like a stream flowing from a perpetual spring; though it may be greatly increased by a shower, and decreased by drought, it yet constantly runs. "The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life," *John*, iv. 14. Many hypocrites are like comets, which appear for a while with a great blaze; they are very irregular, and unsteady in their motion, and are therefore called wandering stars, *Jude*, 13. But real saints are like the fixed stars, which though they rise and set, and are often obscured by clouds; are yet stedfast in their orbits, and may be truly said to shine with a constant light.

And as there is a great disproportion in false religious affections as to different times; so there often is as to different situations. Some are greatly affected in company, but quite otherwise in private meditation, and in secret converse with God. A true Christian undoubtedly delights in religious fellowship, and finds much to affect him in Christian conversation; but he also delights to retire for the purpose of holding communion with God in private. See *Gen* xxiv. 63. How often do we read that Jesus Christ retired into solitary places for holy converse with his Father! It is difficult to conceal strong feelings, but gracious affections are of a less obtrusive nature than those that are counterfeit. The gracious mourning of true penitents, at the beginning of the latter-day glory, is

represented as being so secret, as to be hidden from the companions of their bosoms: "And the Land shall mourn, every family apart, the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart," &c. *Zech.* xii 12—14. The saints mourn in secret for the sins of others: "If ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for *your* pride, and mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive," *Jer.* xiii. 17. Gracious joy is also of a retired nature: "My mouth shall praise *thee* with joyful lips, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the *night*-watches, *Psa.* lxiii. 5.

The most eminent divine favours which the saints have enjoyed, according to what we read in scripture, were enjoyed in their retirement. The principal manifestations which God made of himself, and of his covenant mercy to Abraham, were made when he was alone, apart from his numerous family. Isaac received that special gift of God to him, Rebecca, when walking alone, meditating in the field. Jacob was retired for prayer, when he wrestled with the Angel of the covenant, and obtained the blessing. God revealed himself to Moses in the bush, when he was in a solitary place in the desert, in mount Horeb; and afterwards, when he was admitted to the closest communion with God which he ever enjoyed, he was alone in the same mountain, where he continued forty days and forty nights. God held communion with those great prophets, Elijah and Elisha, and conversed with them freely, chiefly in their retirement. When Jesus Christ had the greatest prelibations of his future glory, it was not when he was with the multitude, or with the twelve disciples, but when retired in a solitary place, with only Peter,

James and John. And when John, the beloved disciple, was favoured with those wonderful visions of Christ, and of his future dispensations towards the church, and the world, which are recorded in the Revelation, he was alone in the Isle of Patmos. I do not deny that there are also instances of great favours received by the saints when in company with others; or that there is not much in Christian conversation, and in social and public worship, tending greatly to refresh and elevate the minds of the saints. All I aim at by what I have said, is to show that true grace, however much it loves Christian society, in a peculiar manner delights in retirement, and secret communion with God. If persons are much engaged in social religion, and but little in the religion of the closet; and but little moved when alone with God; there is reason to doubt the reality of their religion.

XI. Gracious affections, the higher they are raised, the more is a spiritual appetite increased.

The more a person loves God with a gracious affection, the more he desires to love him; and the more he hates sin, the more he desires to hate it. The kindling of gracious affections is like the kindling of a flame, the higher it is raised, the more ardent it is. It is as natural for one who is born spiritually, to thirst after growth in holiness, as it is for a child to desire its mother's breast, 1 *Pet.* ii. 2, 3. The highest enjoyment of the saints in this world, is but a taste, a prelibation of their future glory; and the greatest eminence at which they arrive in the present state, has no tendency to satisfy them, or to abate their desires after more. On the contrary, the advances which they have already made, induce them to press forward with

greater eagerness: "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark. —Let us therefore, as many as be PERFECT, be thus minded," *Phil.* iii. 13—15.

The more we possess of holy affections, the more we have of that spiritual taste of which I have spoken elsewhere, by which we perceive the beauty, and relish the sweetness of moral excellence, or holiness. The more grace we possess, while in this state of imperfection, the more are we sensible of our distance from what we ought to be; and of course the more we feel our need of grace. Besides, grace, so long as it is imperfect, is of a growing nature, and in a growing state. All animated beings, while in a state of imperfection, seek after growth; and so much the more as they are healthy and thriving. The more we possess of spiritual discoveries and affections, the more do we become earnest supplicants for grace, or spiritual food, that we may grow thereby; and the more earnestly do we seek it, in the use of appointed means; for gracious longings after holiness, are not feeble, ineffectual desires.

But it may be said, Is this consistent with what all allow to be the case,—that spiritual enjoyments are of a soul-satisfying nature? I answer, there will appear no inconsistency in this, if it is considered in what respects spiritual enjoyments are said to be soul-satisfying. Certainly they are not of a cloying nature.—They satisfy the soul,

First. As they are adapted to its nature, its capacity and its wants; so that, possessing them, we desire no other kind of enjoyment.

Secondly. They always answer our expectations.

Thirdly. The gratification and pleasure arising from spiritual enjoyments, are permanent.

Fourthly. There is such a fulness and sufficiency in spiritual blessings, that were obstacles arising from our depravity removed, they would satisfy to the utmost extent of our wishes.

But we are not to conclude from these things, that a person who has tasted of spiritual blessings, has no appetite excited after more, or that his appetite will not increase the more he tastes, until he arrives at a state of perfect enjoyment. Bodies attracted to the earth, tend to it the more strongly the nearer they approach. Spiritual good is of a satisfying nature, and for that very reason, the person who tastes it, will thirst after it; and the more he experiences, the more he knows of its satisfying sweetness, the more earnestly will he hunger and thirst for those blessings, until he arrives at absolute perfection. Hence it is that spiritual affections, the greater they are, the more ardent are our desires and endeavours after grace and holiness.

But with false religious affections, it is quite otherwise. If at first there is an ardent desire after more grace, in proportion as these affections rise, that desire ceases, or is abated. Perhaps the mere professor, while under legal convictions, and much afraid of hell, earnestly desires spiritual light in his understanding, faith in Christ, and love to God; but now that those false affections are produced, he no longer feels anxious for light and grace, for his end is answered; he is confident that his sins are forgiven, that he is in the path to heaven, and so he is satisfied. Very high false religious affections put an end especially to ardent desires after grace and holiness. The subject of these affections, is far from appearing to himself as a poor, empty creature; on the contrary, in his own estimation, he is rich, and increased with goods, and

hardly conceives of any thing more excellent than what he has already obtained.

Hence there is an end to the earnestness of many persons, when they have obtained what they call their conversion; or, at least when they have enjoyed those high affections which make them fully confident that they are converted. While they regard themselves as in a state of nature, they seek after God, and cry earnestly for grace in the use of means; but afterwards they act as if their work was done, they live upon their past experience, and there is an end of their striving for divine things. On the other hand, the holy principles which actuate the real saint, have a far more powerful influence in producing earnestness after God and holiness, than that servile fear which stimulates the exertions where nothing more is experienced than mere legal convictions. Hence seeking God is mentioned as one of the distinguishing characteristics of the real saints. *Psa.* xxiv. 6, lxix. 6, 32, lxx. 4. The scriptures every where represent our seeking, striving and labour, as being chiefly subsequent to our regeneration, and our regeneration as forming only the commencement of our work. And almost all that is said in the New Testament respecting watching—giving earnest heed to ourselves—running the race that is set before us,—striving and agonizing,—wrestling not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers,—fighting,—putting on the whole armour of God,—pressing forwards,—reaching forth,—continuing instant in prayer,—crying to God day and night,—is addressed immediately to *saints*. But there are many professors at present, who have adopted a strange anti-scriptural notion about having all their striving and wrestling before they are converted; so as to have

an easy time of it afterwards, enjoying themselves in sloth and indolence. Without doubt there are some hypocrites, who will think themselves well able to abide this test, and who will readily say that they desire not to rest satisfied with present attainments, that they are pressing forward, longing after God, and desiring greater degrees of holiness. But the truth is, their desires are not properly after holiness for its own sake, but only for selfish ends. They long after clearer discoveries, that they may be better satisfied as to the state of their souls; or because, in great discoveries self is gratified, in being so highly favoured of God, and so exalted above other persons. Or perhaps they have a kind of forced longing: they must, they think, long for more grace, otherwise their state would be doubtful. But such things as these are far different from the thirsting of the new man after God and holiness. There is an ardent desire after holiness, as natural to the new creature, as vital heat is to the body. There is a holy panting after the Spirit of God, for an increase of holiness, as natural to the new creature, as breathing is to the animated body. Holiness, or sanctification, is more directly the object of these desires, than any manifestation of the love of God. Where we read in the scripture of the desires, longings and thirstings of the saints, righteousness, and the law of God, are much more frequently mentioned, as their object, than any thing else. The saints desire the sincere milk of the word, not so much to testify the love of God towards them, as that they may grow thereby in holiness. Grace is the good man's treasure, *Isa.* xxxiii. 6. Godliness is the gain of which he is covetous, 1 *Tim.* vi. 6.—Hypocrites long for discoveries, more for the present comfort of them, and from

the notion that they are a manifestation of the love of God, than for their sanctifying influence. But neither longings after great discoveries, or after the love of God; nor desiring to be in heaven, or to die; is so distinguishing a mark of true piety, as earnest desires after holiness of heart and life.—I now come to the last distinguishing sign of holy affections, which I intended to mention.

XII. Gracious affections are practical in their exercises and effects.

Christian practice implies three things;

1. A behaviour or conduct universally agreeing with the will of God.

2. A holy conduct pursued with the greatest earnestness and diligence; so as to make the practice of religion eminently our work and business.

3. A perseverance in holiness to the end of life; so as to make religion not only our business at certain seasons, or upon extraordinary occasions; but the business of life; a business adhered to through all changes, and under all trials.

The necessity of each of these in order to true religion, is most clearly and fully taught in the word of God.

1. It is necessary that we should be *universally* obedient: "Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure," 1 *John*, iii. 3. "Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not; whosoever sinneth, hath not seen him, neither known him," verse 6. "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you," *John*, xv. 14.—"Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point,—is guilty of all," *James*, ii. 10. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these:* Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance,

emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like ; of which I tell you,—as I have told *you*, in time past, that they" who " do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God," *Gal.* v. 19, 20, 21. One sin retained and indulged will cut us off from everlasting salvation, *Matt.* v. 29, 30. Saul was commanded to slay all the Amalekites ; he slew all but Agag, and the saving of him alive, proved his ruin. Caleb and Joshua entered into the promised rest, because they followed the Lord fully. *Num.* xiv. 24, xxxii. 11, 12. *Deut.* i. 35, 36. *Josh.* xiv. 6—14. Naaman appeared to be greatly affected with gratitude for the healing of his leprosy, and he proposed to engage in the service of God, yet in one thing he desired to be excused. Hence appeared his hypocrisy. And Herod, though he feared John, and heard him gladly, and, in consequence, did many things; yet he refused to part with his beloved Herodias, and for this refusal, no doubt he was condemned. It is necessary that we should part with our dearest iniquities, those which are as our right hand and right eye ; sins which most easily beset us, and to which we are most exposed from our natural inclinations, or particular circumstances. Christ will not reveal his love to us until we part with our dearest sins, nor until we are brought to comply with the most difficult duties.

Our obedience must not consist in the mere negatives; it must also include the positives of religion. Sins of omission are breaches of the commands of God, as much as sins of commission. Christ, in *Matt.* xxv. represents those who shall be placed at the left hand, as being condemned for sins of omission, " I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat," &c. A man therefore cannot be

said to be universally obedient, only because he is no thief, nor drunkard, nor whoremonger, nor profane swearer, nor liar; because he is not dishonest, unclean or malicious; he must also be pious, humble, meek, forgiving, peaceful, benevolent, merciful and charitable. Without these things, he does not obey the laws of Christ,—laws abundantly insisted on in the scriptures, as being of the greatest importance, and never to be dispensed with.

2. In order to our being true Christians, it is necessary that we pursue the service of God with great earnestness and diligence, as the main business of our lives. All the people of God not only perform them, but are *zealous* of good works. *Tit.* ii. 14. No man can do the service of two masters at once. Those who are the true servants of God, give themselves up to his service, and make it their constant work; that which employs their best affections, and the chief of their strength. *Phil.* iii. 13 Christians in their effectual calling, are not called to idleness, but to labour in the vineyard of the Lord, and to spend their days in doing a great and laborious service. All true Christians comply with this call, and do the work of Christians;—that work which, in the New-Testament, is every where compared to those exercises, in which men are accustomed to exert their strength with the greatest earnestness, as running, wrestling, fighting, &c. The kingdom of heaven is not to be taken but by violence. Without earnestness, there is no proceeding in that narrow way which leads to life; and so no arriving at that state of happiness and glory to which it leads. Without earnest labour, there is no ascending the *hill* of Zion; and so no arriving at the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem. There is need of watch-

ing and praying always, in order to our escaping those dreadful evils which are coming on the ungodly, and our being counted worthy to stand before the Son of man. There is need of our putting on the whole armour of God, and our exercising the utmost firmness, in order to our avoiding a total overthrow, and being utterly destroyed by the fiery darts of the wicked one. It is necessary that we should forget the things that are behind, and reach forth to the things that are before, pressing towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, in order to our obtaining that prize. Slothfulness in the service of God, is as destructive as open rebellion: for the slothful servant is a wicked servant, and shall be cast into outer darkness, among the more determined enemies of God. *Matt.* xxv. 26, 30. They who are slothful, are not followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises. *Heb.* vi. 11, 12. All who follow that cloud of witnesses which is gone before to heaven, lay aside every weight, and the sin that most easily besets them, and run with patience the race set before them. *Heb.* xii 1. That faith by which we rely upon the righteousness of Christ, and truly live upon him, is invariably accompanied by such a spirit of earnestness in the Christian work.

3. Every true Christian perseveres, in the way of universal obedience through all the various trials by which he is exercised, to the end of life. That all true saints,—all those who obtain eternal life, thus persevere in the service of God, is a doctrine so abundantly taught in the scriptures, that to quote all the texts which imply, or clearly assert it, would be almost endless; I shall therefore

content myself with referring in the margin to some of them.*

But that perseverance which is insisted on in the scriptures, as a special evidence of grace, is the continuance of professors in the practice of their duty ;—a being steadfast in a holy conduct through the various trials to which they are exposed.

By trials, I mean those things which render our continuance in the path of duty, and in faithfulness to God, difficult. Some things tend to cherish or provoke our depraved inclinations ; some lessen restraints, and embolden us to commit sin ; and some make our duty appear terrible, and so tend to frighten us, and drive us from it. God, in his providence, tries his friends, in order that he may make them manifest,—that he may exhibit to their own consciences, and to the world, sufficient matter of conviction as to their real state.†

True saints may in some degree backslide, they may be foiled by particular temptations, and may fall even into great sins ; but they never fall so as to grow weary of religion, and the service of God, and habitually, and finally to dislike and neglect it, either on its own account, or on account of the difficulties which attend it. This is evident from *Gal.* vi. 9. *Rom.* ii. 7. *Heb.* x. 36. Those who are truly converted are new men,—new creatures,—they are sanctified throughout, in spirit, soul and body :—old things are passed away,—all things are become new ;—they have new dispositions ;—a new conversation and a new practice ;— they walk

* *Psa.* cvi. 3. cxxv. 4. 5. *Isa.* lxiv. 5. *Matt.* x. 22. xiii. 4—8. 19—23 xxiv. 12. 13. *Luke*, ix. 62. xxii. 28. *John*, viii. 30, 31. xv. 16. *Rom.* ii. 7 *Gal.* i. 22,23. *Heb.* vi. 11, 12. x. 35, &c. *James.* i. 25. *Rev.* ii. 13, 26. iii. 10. 2 *Tim.* iv. 14.

† *Gen.* xxii. 1. *Exod.* vi. 4. *Deut*, viii. 2. 15, 16. xiii. 3. *Judges*, ii. 20—22. iii. 1, 3, 4. *Job.* xxiii. 10 *Psa.* lxvi. 10. 11. *Zech.* xiii. 7. &c. *Matt.* viii. 19, 20. 1 *Cor.* xi. 19. *James.* i. 12. 1 *Pet.* iv. 12. 1 *John.* ii. 19. *Heb.* xi. 17. *Rev*, iii. 10.

in newness of life,—and continue to do so to the end of life. Those who fall away, and cease thus to walk, give evidence that they were never risen with Christ. This is especially the case, when the persuasion that they are converted, and so in a safe state, is the very cause of their declension. It is the same, whether they fall into their former sins, or have the corruption of nature, instead of being mortified, turned into a new channel. Some persons who think themselves converted, do not indeed return to their former profaneness and lewdness; but from a high opinion of their experience, graces and privileges, gradually settle in a self-righteous temper of mind, and adopt a correspondent behaviour. When it is thus with professors, however far they may appear to have departed from their former evil practices, this alone is sufficient to condemn them, and may render their latter state far worse than their former This appears to have been the case with the Jews, who having been awakened by the preaching of John the Baptist, and brought to relinquish their former licentious conduct, whereby the unclean spirit was expelled, and the house swept and garnished; yet, being without grace, were filled with an exceeding high opinion of their own righteousness, and became habituated to a correspondent, self-exalting behaviour; thus exchanging the sins of publicans and harlots, for those of the pharisees; and the consequence was, they became possessed by seven devils, worse than the first, *Matt.* xii. 43—45.

Thus I have explained what I mean, when I say, that gracious affections are practical in their exercises and effects.

This subject may be farther illustrated and confirmed by our considering, that the holy scriptures

place sincerity and soundness of religion, in our making choice of God as our portion;—in our complying with the requirements of the religion of Christ;—in our embracing it with all its difficulties, disregarding even our lives for the sake of Christ;—and in our giving up ourselves, with all that we possess, wholly and forever to his service. Now if we give up ourselves, with our affections, to his service, without reserve, we shall behave ourselves universally as those who are devoted to his glory; and if we cordially and deliberately embrace the religion of Jesus, with all its difficulties, and with all the sacrifices it requires, we shall embrace it universally and practically, with decision and perseverance.

The tendency of grace in the heart, to a holy practice, is direct, and the connexion natural, intimate and necessary. There is nothing in heaven, or on earth, of a more active nature than true grace; it is spiritual and divine life itself. Godliness in the heart, is as directly related to practice, as a fountain is to a stream. To promote holy practice is a principal object of regeneration; and every thing in this great change is calculated to secure this important end: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," *Eph.* ii. 10. "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," *Tit.* ii. 14. See also 2 *Cor.* v. 15. *Heb.* ix. 14. *Col.* i. 21, 22. 1 *Pet.* i. 18. *Luke* i. 74, 75. Holy practice is as much the object of God in all that he does respecting his saints, as fruit is the object of all the husbandman does in the cultivation of his field or vineyard. Every thing belonging to Christian experience, directly and immediately leads to a holy practice.

As the real saint is always attentive to a holy practice, so he only is thus attentive. All unsanctified men are workers of iniquity; they are of their father the devil, and his works they will do. Mere pretenders to religion will not endure the trials to which, in general, professors are exposed; they will not continue faithful to Christ in practice, and follow him whithersoever he goes. However far they may proceed in religion, they are still the servants of sin; the chains of their old task masters are not broken; their lusts have still a reigning power in their hearts, and therefore to these masters they will continue to render obedience; "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked" will "do wickedly," *Dan.* xii. 10. An unsanctified man may hide his sin, and in many things, and for a time deny himself; but he will not finally renounce his sin; it is too dear to him: "Wickedness" is "sweet in his mouth;—he" spareth "it, and forsaketh "it not," *Job* xx. 12, 13. Herein chiefly consists the straitness of the gate, and the narrowness of the way that leads to life,—the way of life is a way of self-denial and self-renunciation.

Many natural men, under the discipline of divine providence, do as Pharaoh did, with regard to his pride and covetousness, when the Lord strove with him respecting the liberation of his people Israel. When the hand of God pressed hard upon him, and when exercised with the dread of future wrath, he promised to let the people go; but from time to time he violated his promise, when he saw that there was respite. When God filled Egypt with thunder and lightning, and the fire ran along the ground; then Pharaoh was brought to confess his sin with seeming humility, and to express his willingness to let the people

go. *Exod.* ix. 27. 28. So the unregenerate are sometimes, by the terrors of the law, apparently humbled, and seem disposed to part with their sins; but they are no more sincerely disposed to forsake them, than Pharaoh was to let the people go. Pharaoh in the struggle between his conscience and his avarice, was for contriving that God might be served, and he himself gratified by the slavery of the people. Moses insisted that God should be sacrificed to; Pharaoh was willing that he should, provided it was done without his parting with the people. *Exod.* viii. 25, &c. So many sinners are for contriving to serve God, and to enjoy their sinful gratifications at the same time. Pharaoh afterward consented to let the people go, provided they did not go far away; he was not willing to part with them finally, and therefore wished to keep them within his reach. Similar is the conduct of many hypocrites, with respect to their sins. Pharaoh then consented to let the men go, if they would leave the women and children. *Exod.* x. 8—10. And then after that, when the hand of God was still heavier upon him, he consented that they should go, even the women and children, as well as the men, provided they would leave their cattle behind. *Exod.* x. 24. So it often is with sinners, they are willing to part with some of their sins, but not all; to part with the grosser acts of sin, but not with its secret indulgence. At last, Pharaoh consented to let the people go, and all that they had; but he soon repented, and pursued them. Thus there may be a forced parting with sin, which seems to be universal for a little while; but as the principle of sin is not mortified, the dog returns to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.—There were many false disciples in

the time of Christ, who followed him for a while; but some on one occasion, and some on another, went back and walked no more with him.

From what has been said, it is manifest that Christian practice, or a holy life, is a great and distinguishing evidence of saving grace. But I may go further, and assert, that it is the chief evidence of grace, both as it respects ourselves and others.

1. I consider Christian practice, or a holy life, as a manifestation of the sincerity of a professor, as it respects his neighbours, and his Christian brethren.

That this is the case, is very evident from the word of God. Christ has repeatedly declared that we should know professors by their fruits. *Matt.* vii. 16. And then, after assigning very sufficient reasons why the moral conduct of professors, must necessarily form the chief, and most decisive evidence as to their real character, he repeats the assertion: "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them," ver. 20. "Every tree is known by" its "fruit." *Luke*, vi. 44. It is no where said, Ye shall know the tree by its leaves or its flowers; or ye shall know men by their talk, or by what they say about their experience, &c. but "By their fruits ye shall know them; the tree is known by its fruit."

And as this is the chief criterion to which Christ has directed us, in order to our forming a right judgment of others; so it is the chief evidence which we are to present to others, in order that they may form a right judgment of us: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father" who "is in heaven," *Matt.* v. 16. Christ does not say that others, hearing your good words, but that others seeing your good *works*, may glorify your Father

who is in heaven. The Apostles mention Christian practice as the principal ground upon which they formed a judgment of professing Christians. In the beginning of the sixth chapter of Hebrews, the Apostle speaks of those who have had great illuminations, who afterwards fall away; and then in the ninth verse, he adds, "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation;" and then, in the next verse, he assigns the reason of his good opinion of them. He does not say that he judged favourably of them, from the account they had given of the work of God upon their souls, or from their talking very experimentally; but from their *work* and *labour* of love: "For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." The same Apostle speaks of serving God in practice, as the only satisfactory proof of supreme love to Christ, and a disposition to prefer his honour to our own interest: "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's; but ye know the proof of him [Timotheus,] that as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel," *Phil.* ii. 21, 22. The Apostle John, expressing his good opinion of Gaius, says,—"I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee," 3 *John* 3—6. But how did the brethren testify of the truth that was in Gaius? and upon what circumstance did the Apostle form his judgment respecting him? It was not from their testifying that he had given them a good account of his experience, and had talked in the very language of a Christian, like one that felt what he said; but they testified, that he walked in the truth: "I have no greater joy than to hear that

my children walk in the truth. Beloved, thou dost faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers," who "have born witness of thy charity before the church." Thus the Apostle explains what the brethren had borne witness of, when they came and testified of his walking in the truth. In the tenth verse, he mentions Diotrephes, who had behaved himself improperly, and led away others after him; and then in the eleventh verse, he desires Gaius to beware of such, and not to follow them, and then he lays down a criterion by which he might judge of persons of this description, and this criterion exactly agrees with that which Christ had given:—"By their fruits ye shall know them." "Beloved," says the Apostle, "follow—that which is good. He that doeth good, is of God; but he that doeth evil, hath not seen God," 3 *John* 11. I would further observe, that the Apostle James, speaking of showing our faith, or religion, *by* our practice, or works; and of showing our faith *without* works, very evidently and decidedly prefers the former mode of ascertaining our characters: "Yea, a man may say, thou hast faith, and I have works; shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works," *Jas.* ii. 18. A manifestation of our faith without works, is a mere profession of faith; and, as the Apostle says, verse 14, "What *doth it* profit—though a man *say* he hath faith?" There are two ways of manifesting to others what is in our hearts; one by what we say, and the other by what we do. Certainly our saying that we have faith, that we are converted; our relating the manner of our conversion, and the experience that accompanied and followed, is only showing our faith by our words, which the Apostle speaks of a falling far

far short of manifesting, or showing our faith by our works.

As the scriptures very clearly assert, that practice is the best evidence of sincerity, in a profession of religion, so reason teaches the same thing. The common sense of mankind universally directs them to judge, in other concerns, of men's dispositions, chiefly from their practice; as for instance, whether a man is a loyal subject, a real friend, or a faithful servant. If a man professes a great deal of friendship for another, we conclude, at once, from rational principles, that such profession is by no means so decisive, as a series of actions, as a faithful adherence in the hour of adversity, and as a readiness to sacrifice his own interest, in order to promote that of his friend. A prudent man will trust to such proofs of friendship, sooner than a thousand earnest professions, solemn declarations, and affectionate expressions. And it is equally consistent with right reason to regard practice as the best evidence of friendship towards Christ; "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them," says the Lord Jesus Christ, "he it is that loveth me," *John* xiv. 21. Thus, if a man appears to imitate Christ, and greatly to exert himself to promote his kingdom and interest in the world, we are taught by rational principles, that this is an evidence of love, more to be depended upon, than if he only talked of his love to Christ, and related, what he might call, his experience of the love of Christ. One man, in declaring his experience, tells how he has found his heart weaned from the world; but he is anxious in pursuing the world, and exceedingly unwilling to part, for charitable and pious uses, with much of what he obtains; but there is another professing Christian, who says but little; and yet he is

ready, at any time, to sacrifice his own interest, or gratification, when it stands in the way of his duty; and is always willing to part with his property, to promote religion and the good of his fellow creatures. Now reason teaches, that the latter gives a far more credible evidence of a heart weaned from the world than the former. If a man appears to walk humbly with God, and maintains a conversation indicating a broken heart,—if he is patient under affliction, and meek in his behaviour; he presents better evidence of humility, than if he told how deep a sense he has had of his unworthiness, and how he has been brought to lie in the dust, emptied of self, &c. If a professor is assuming, and impatient of the least opposition, we may be confident that he is not what he professes to be. Again, if a professor of religion manifests in his behaviour, a tenderness of spirit towards those who are in calamity, and is willing to communicate his property to promote the welfare of others, both as to their bodies and their souls, is not this a much clearer manifestation of a spirit of love to men, than his only telling what love he felt to them at certain times, how he pitied their souls, and was in travail for them? Transient affections easily produce words; and words are cheap. Hypocrites may be much more easily brought to talk, than to act like saints.

Hence it is evident that our moral, and religious conduct, is the most satisfactory manifestation which we can possibly make of our piety, as it respects our neighbours, and our Christian brethren.

But then the following things should be well observed, in order that this subject may be rightly understood.

In the first place, It should be remembered, that

when the scriptures speak of Christian practice, as the best evidence, with regard to others, of our being in a state of grace, a profession of religion is always supposed. The criterion, mentioned above, was given to the followers of Christ exclusively, to guide them in their opinions of professing Christians, and of those who offered to become members of their societies; and not for the trial of heathens, or of those who made no profession of Christianity, and with whom therefore they had nothing to do. This is evident from the passage already quoted from the seventh of *Matthew*, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Jesus Christ applies this rule to those who made a very high profession, that is, the false prophets, who came in sheep's clothing, verse 15. In the following passage of the epistle of *James*, it is evident that both the person speaking, and the person spoken to, are professors of faith in Christ: "Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works."

Again, as this rule is not applied to the man who explicitly denies Christianity, and is a professed infidel; neither is it applied to him who makes no particular profession of serious piety.

But what, it may be asked, is comprehended in a profession of religion?—I answer, a genuine Christian profession, includes an enlightened understanding. Professors of religion must be so far instructed in the principles of Christianity, as to understand the proper import of what is expressed in their profession. But in order to a credible profession of religion, it is not necessary that a particular account should be given of the method by which the Holy Spirit effected the work of conversion. There are no traces in scripture of any such relation being required by the Apostles or

primitive Christians, in order to their receiving, and treating others as their brethren ; or of their first examining candidates respecting the particular order of their experience. They required of them a profession as to what was wrought ; but no account of the manner in which it was effected. There is not in the scriptures, even the shadow of any such custom.

I am far from denying the expediency of professors giving an account of their experience to their brethren ; nor do I suppose that giving an account of our experience, as to particular exercises of grace, affords no assistance to others in forming a judgment of our state ; I admit also that our being able to give a distinct account of the manner of our conversion, is a circumstance which adds clearness to the evidence of a work of grace. But what I mention as unscriptural, is the requiring a particular, and exact account of the method and steps by which the Spirit of God proceeded in bringing our souls into a state of salvation, as absolutely indispensable, in order to our being esteemed real Christians ; or the neglect or rejection of other signs of a state of grace, which are far more important and decisive.

A profession of religion, is a profession of all that is necessary in order to our being religious. If we take one part of religion and leave out another that is essential to it, what we take is not religion, because something which is of the essence of it is wanting. Thus in order to a profession of religion we must profess, that we believe in Jesus Christ, as the only Saviour, because such belief is essential to Christianity. We must also profess to believe that Jesus Christ made an atonement for sin. In short, we must profess faith in all the essential doctrines of the gospel, because a belief of these is absolutely

necessary in order to real piety. But there are other things as essential to religion, as an orthodox creed; of which it is therefore as necessary that we should make profession, before we can with propriety be said to profess religion. Thus it is essential to personal religion, that we repent of our sins, that we forsake them, and that we cordially embrace Christ as our Saviour, giving up ourselves to be his servants entirely and forever. Such things as these belong as much to the essence of religion, as the belief of any of the doctrines of the gospel, and therefore the profession of them, either expressed or implied, as much belongs to a Christian profession. In ascertaining the different parts of a Christian profession, we must be guided by the word of God.

In the first place, I notice repentance as being one particular to which a Christian profession must have respect. See *Matt.* iii. 6. *Mark*, i. 4. *Matt.* iii. 7—12. *Acts*, ii. 38. *Neh.* ix. 2, 33, 35.

Again, I notice a profession of decided reliance upon the work of Christ for salvation. See *Isa.* xlv. 22, &c. *Deut.* xxvi. 17. 1 *Cor.* i. 30, 31.

And lastly, I mention a profession of universal obedience to the will of God. See *Exod.* xix. 8. & xxiv. 3, 7. *Deut.* xxvi. 16—18. 2 *Kings*, xxiii. 3. *Neh.* x. 28, 29. *Psa.* cxix. 57, 106. 2 *Chron.* xv. 12—14.

Hence, in order to our being justly esteemed sincere professors of religion, according to the rules of Christ and his Apostles, we must exhibit a holy life, together with a profession, either expressing, or at least implying such particulars as those which have now been enumerated.

In the second place, That we may rightly understand, how Christian practice is the best evidence of the sincerity of a professing Christian, it is

necessary that what has been said respecting the nature of Christian practice, should be borne in mind. It should also be considered how far Christian practice may not be exposed to the view of others. Merely that a professor of religion is a moral man, is no decisive proof, of the sincerity of his profession. To proceed no further than this is not making our light shine before men. This is not that work and labour of love manifested towards the name of Christ, which gave the Apostle such a conviction of the sincerity of the professing Hebrews. *Heb.* vi. 9, 10. There may appear nothing in a man's life and conversation, inconsistent with his being truly pious, and yet there may be no clear positive evidence that he is so. But there may be very decisive, positive evidence of holiness in the general conduct of professors. They may give evidence of the universal performance of their duty, both to God, and to man; of their walking as Christians in the house of God, in their families, and among their neighbours; of a disposition to deny themselves, and a willingness to suffer for Christ, the interests of religion, and the benefit of their brethren; and when this is the case, there is an evidence of their sincerity, far more decisive and important, than would be afforded by all other marks of gracious affections united.

In the third place, It must be remembered, agreeably to what was formerly observed, that no appearances whatever are infallible proofs of grace. The signs which have been mentioned are the best that can be given; and are such as oblige us to receive the professors as saints, and to rejoice in them, and love them as the children of God: but nothing that appears to us in their spirit and conduct, can be sufficient to produce an absolute

certainty in our minds, as to the state of their souls; for we see not their hearts, nor all their behaviour; much of it is in secret. It is impossible to determine with certainty, how far a person, from wrong principles, may proceed in the imitation of Christian graces. Though undoubtedly, if we were acquainted with as much of men's practices, as their own consciences are, we might judge with infallible certainty as to their state.—This will further appear from what follows.

Having thus considered Christian practice as the best evidence of our sincerity, as it respects others, I now proceed,

II. To observe, that the scriptures also speak of Christian practice as a satisfactory evidence of grace, as it respects our own consciences: "Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments," 1 *John*, ii. 3. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed,* and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him," 1 *John*, iii. 18, 19. And the Apostle Paul, in the sixth of Hebrews, speaks of the work and labour of love of those to whom he wrote, as that which produced in them a persuasion that they possessed something superior to the highest common illuminations; and which tended to afford them the most satisfactory hope concerning themselves: "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things which accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your labour of love, which ye have shewed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the

* In the original it is ΕΡΓΩ, in *work*.

end," verse 9, &c.—The Apostle directs the Galatians to examine their practice, that they might rejoice in the safety and happiness of their state: "Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself, and not in another," *Gal.* vi. 4. The Psalmist says, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments," *Psa.* cxix. 6. Our Saviour, speaking to his immediate followers, says, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that DOETH THE WILL of my Father.—Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, &c.—And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, YE THAT WORK INIQUITY. Therefore, whosoever heareth these saying of mine, and DOETH them, I will liken him unto a wise man who built his house upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and DOETH THEM NOT, shall be likened unto a foolish man" who "built his house upon the sand." *Matt.* vii. 21—26.

But I shall have occasion afterwards to mention other texts of the same description.

For the sake of greater clearness, I would first show, what we are to understand by Christian practice, when the scriptures represent it as a sure evidence to ourselves that we are real Christians; and, secondly, attempt to prove that this is the best evidence which any man can have of his being a Christian indeed.

First. I would explain the nature of that practice, which the scriptures represent as a sure evidence to ourselves that we are real Christians.

When the scriptures speak of good works, we cannot reasonably suppose, that they have respect merely to what is *external*, and not at all to the *aim, or intention* of the agent. Exertions of the

body, thus regarded, are neither acts of obedience, nor disobedience, any more than the motions of the body in a convulsion. But that obedience which constitutes the best evidence of grace, as it respects ourselves, is the obedience of the soul. I do not suppose, however, that when the scriptures mention holy practice as an evidence of grace, they mean to include both the principle of piety and the exercise of that principle; because, in that case, the same thing would be mentioned both as the sign, and the thing signified. I conclude, therefore, that only that gracious exercise of the soul is intended, which terminates in what is called the imperative acts of the will, in which something, by the direction of the mind, is effected in practice. There are two kinds of exercises of grace:

[1.] Those which are called immanent acts, that is, such as begin and terminate within the soul, possessing no immediate relation to any thing that is practical. Such are the exercises of grace which are confined to contemplation.

[2.] There is another kind of gracious exercise which is practical, or effective, because it immediately respects something to be done. It is the influence of grace, in the volitions of the will, directing our actions. As for instance, when a believer, from a spirit of Christian charity, communicates to the necessities of the poor, or willingly from supreme love to Christ, endures persecution, in the path of duty; in both these cases there are the operations of grace, producing their correspondent actions. The acts of the soul, under the influence of grace, in the performance of good works, are the good works themselves. As Dr. Doddridge observes,* the determinations of the will are, in-

* Scripture Doctrine of Salvation, Serm. 1, p. ii.

deed, our very actions. In this exercise of the soul, is included the aim and intention of the mind. We should not regard the motions of a statue distributing alms by clock work, as being acts of obedience to Christ; neither should we call the voluntary actions of any man, however agreeable in appearance to the will of God, by the name of obedience to Christ, if he had never heard of him, or had no reference to his commands in what he did. If true Christian obedience does not consist in the mere motions of the body only, but in the operations of the soul also, the whole exercise of the mind must be considered, including the motives by which it is actuated, and the respect it has to the will of God; otherwise it cannot be ascertained that our actions are obedience to the will of God. As he regards the soul more than the body, it is the principle by which our minds are influenced, that he chiefly looks at in all our actions.

Now this is what we are to understand by obedience, when mentioned in scripture, as a sure evidence to ourselves that we possess a principle of grace: it is the obedience of the soul, prompting and governing our moral actions. When practice is mentioned as a decisive evidence of our piety, as it respects ourselves, that in our practice with which *we* only are acquainted is always included. When Christ, at the conclusion of his sermon upon the mount, speaks of our doing, or practising those sayings of his, as the grand evidence of our being true disciples, he has respect not only to our actions, but also to the exercise of mind by which those actions are prompted. This will be evident, if we consider what those sayings are to which he refers: we shall find them as follows: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are they that mourn; blessed are the meek; blessed are

the merciful; blessed are the pure in heart;" &c. &c. We are often commanded to love one another; but this commandment respects chiefly an exercise of mind, terminating in practice. When we are told in scripture, that men shall, at the last day, be judged "according to their works," and that "all shall receive according to the things done in the body," we are not to understand this of actions only; for God is often spoken of as searching the heart, and trying the reins, that he may render to every one according to his works. See *Rev.* ii. 23. *Jer.* xvii. 9, 10. But if by works we are to understand mere actions, what need is there of searching the heart, and trying the reins, in order to know them?—Hezekiah, in his sickness, pleaded his moral conduct as an evidence of his title to the favour of God, including not only his actions, but also the state of his mind: "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee, in truth, and with a perfect heart," *Isa.* xxxviii 3.

Though in this evidence of sincerity, what is inward is of greatest importance, yet what is outward is also included; and hereby are cut off all pretensions which unholy professors can possibly have as to signs of godliness

Secondly, I proceed to show, that Christian practice, thus explained, is the chief evidence to ourselves that we are really Christians. It is an evidence very much superior to any inference drawn from our first convictions, our knowledge, or our comfort, or any exercises of grace whatever, which begin and end in the mind. This appears from the following arguments.

Argument I. Reason clearly shows, that those things which men actually prefer, when left to follow their own choice, are what they do really

prefer in their hearts. Sincerity in religion, agreeably to what has been observed, consists in placing our affections supremely upon God, in having a disposition to resign all for Christ, &c. But our actions are the proper evidence as to what we really prefer. As for instance, when God and other things are placed in competition: religion and its connected blessings on the one hand, and worldly interest or pleasure on the other; a man's behaviour under such circumstances, in actually forsaking the one and adhering to the other, is the proper test as to which he really prefers. Sincerity consists in forsaking all for Christ in affection; but to forsake all for Christ in affection, is the same thing as to have a disposition to forsake all for Christ; and certainly the proper trial, whether a man has such a disposition, is his being actually put to it,—his having Christ and other things so placed in competition, that he must necessarily forsake the one and adhere to the other.

It is therefore extremely absurd for any one to say that he has a good heart, while he lives a wicked life, or does not bring forth the fruit of universal holiness in his practice. For it is proved, in fact, that such men do not love God supremely. Men who live in the indulgence of sin, and yet flatter themselves that they shall go to heaven, act as though they hoped to make a fool of their judge.—This is implied in what the Apostle says in the following passage: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," *Gal.* vi. 7.

Argument II. It is also evident that those circumstances which put it to the test, whether men will prefer the approbation of God to other things in *practice*, are the proper trials of their sincerity. Those circumstances which constitute the difficul-

ties of religion, or those things which render the performance of our duty difficult, upon any other principle than the love of God, are properly denominated trials. They are so, because by them the reality of a supreme love to God is brought to the test of experiment and fact. The scriptures, when they call the difficulties by which Christians are exercised, temptations or trials, explain themselves to mean thereby, the trial of our faith. See *James*, i. 2, 3. 1 *Pet.* i. 6, 7. The Apostle Paul speaks of the duty of parting with our property to the poor, as the proof of the sincerity of our love. 2 *Cor.* viii. 8. The difficulties of religion are often represented in scripture, as trying professors in the same way as the furnace tries gold and silver. *Psa.* lxvi. 10, 11. *Zech.* xiii. 9. That which has the appearance of gold, is put into the furnace in order that it may be ascertained, whether it is what it seems to be, or not. So the difficulties of religion try those who have the profession and the appearance of saints. If we put gold into the furnace, we ascertain its great value and preciousness; and so, when under trials, true Christian virtues appear in all their inestimable importance. 1 *Pet.* i. 7. Pure gold will come out of the furnace in full weight; so true saints will lose nothing in the furnace of affliction; they will come forth as gold. *Job.* xxiii. 10. Christ distinguishes true grace from counterfeit by this, it is as gold tried in the fire. *Rev.* iii. 17, 18. Hence it is evident that those things which are called trials in scripture, are so denominated, principally as they try the sincerity of professors. And it is also evident that they are the most proper trials of their sincerity. And if these things are the proper trials of the sincerity of professors, then certainly the result of the trial, or experiment,—the behaviour of professors under such trials,—is the proper ev-

idence of their sincerity. Those things which present difficulties to the performance of duty, are called trials only with regard to the result; and this result is the most proper evidence of grace to the consciences of those who are thus tried. For when God is said to try men by those things, we are not to understand that he tries them for his own information,or that he may obtain evidence of their sincerity; but chiefly for *their* satisfaction, and to exhibit evidence to *their own* consciences. Thus when God is said to prove Israel by difficulties in the wilderness, and by their enemies in Canaan, —to know what was in their hearts, wiether they would keep his commandments or not, it must be understood that these trials were to manifest their sincerity to themselves, that they might know what was in their own hearts. So when God tempted, or tried Abraham with that painful command of offering up his son, it was not for his own satisfaction, but for the satisfaction of Abraham, that he might have a clear manifestation of the favour of God towards him. When Abraham had proved faithful under this trial, God says to him, "Now I know that thou fearet God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." This declaration implies, that in the practical exercise of grace, the existence of that grace was rendered more evident. We find also that Christ repeatedly adopted the same means of convincing those who pretended friendship to him, and of showing them what they were. This was the method he took with the rich young man. *Matt.* xix. 16, &c. This man appeared to show much respect for Christ; he came kneeling to him, calling him good master,and making a great profession of obedience to the commands of God; but Christ put his sincerity to the test by bidding him sell all that he

had, give it to the poor, take up his cross and follow him. So he tried another, of whom we read in *Matt.* viii. 20. This person professed great respect for Christ, saying, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Christ immediately puts his friendship to the test, by telling him that "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." And thus Christ is accustomed still to try professors in general. The seed sown in different kinds of ground, appears all alike when it first springs up; yet when it is tried by the heat of the sun, the difference becomes evident.

Since, therefore, these are the things by which God is pleased to try us, it is undoubtedly the safest way for us, to try ourselves by the same means. As these trials are not for his information, but for ours, we ought to receive our information from them, respecting the sincerity of our attachment to Christ. If we wish to know whether a building is strong, or not, we should view it when the wind blows. When a man comes to the place where the path divides, one branch leading to Christ, the other to the gratification of his lusts, then he is brought to the test,—then his real disposition, or the state of his mind, is likely to be ascertained.

Argument III. Another argument by which it is proved that holy practice, as it has been already described, is the best evidence of our being in a state of grace, as it respects ourselves,—is, that by practice, grace is said in scripture to be made perfect, or to be finished: "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect," or finished, as the original properly means, *James*, ii. 22. Our love to God is said to be made perfect, or finished, in our keeping his

commandments: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoso keepeth his word, in him verily the love of God is perfected." I *John*, ii. 4, 5. The commandment of Christ, to which he here alludes, as appears from the following verses, is that great command of his, which respects deeds of love to our brethren. Again, we have a similar passage in chap. iv. ver. 12. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." Here, doubtless, the Apostle has respect to that practical love of the brethren, which he had explained in the preceding chapter, in which he speaks of our loving one another, as being an evidence of our love to God: "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels *of compassion*," &c. "how dwelleth the love of God in him?" My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed," or practically, "and in truth," ver. 17, 18. It is by thus loving in deed, or practically, that the love of God is perfected in us.—Grace is said to be made perfect, or finished, in holy practice, as therein it produces its proper effect, and issues in that exercise which forms its main and ultimate object: the design of grace is thus accomplished, and its operations completed.

Now if grace is thus made perfect in its fruit, —if these practical exercises of grace, are those in which it appears in its proper effects, in which whatsoever belongs to its design, tendency and operation, is completed,—then these exercises must be the best evidences of grace. The nature and tendency of every principle, must appear with the greatest clearness in its most perfect exercises. The Apostle James says, by works is faith

made perfect; and from this he argues that works are the chief evidence of faith, *James*, ii. 22 And the Apostle John, after he has repeatedly told us, that love is made perfect by our keeping the commandments of Christ, observes, that perfect love casteth out fear. 1 *John*, iv. 18.

Argument IV Another circumstance which makes it evident, that holy practice is the principal evidence which we ought to make use of in judging both of our own, and of the sincerity of others,—is, that this evidence is above all others insisted on in scripture. A common acquaintance with the Bible will be sufficient to convince any one, that this is far more insisted on, as an indication of true piety, than any other evidence. In the New Testament, where Christ and his Apostles are purposely directing us to marks of true godliness, this is almost exclusively mentioned. It may be observed also, that Christ and his Apostles very often, in speaking upon the great doctrines of religion, so far show what the nature of true godliness is, that, by just consequence, we may infer what are the signs by which it is indicated. They also frequently, and with design, propose criterions for the trial of professors, introducing what they say with such expressions as these: "By this are manifest the children of God, and the children of the devil: Hereby we shall assure our hearts," &c. But I find no place, in which either Christ, or his Apostles, point out signs of godliness, but where Christian practice is almost the only thing insisted on. In many of those places indeed, "love to the brethren" is spoken of as a sign of godliness; and there is no other virtuous affection, or disposition so often mentioned as a mark of true grace; but then the scriptures explain themselves to mean chiefly this affection as

exercised and expressed in *practice*, or in *deeds* of love. The Apostle John who, above all others, insists on love to the brethren as a sign of godliness, very evidently means love terminating in practice: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother, abideth in death. —Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us love not in word, neither in tongue, but in deed," that is, practically, "and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." So that when the scriptures insist on our loving one another, as a sign of our godliness, we are not thereby to understand the mere workings of affection, so much as our cordially practising all the duties we owe to our brethren;—all that the New Testament repeatedly tells us is comprehended in the duty of loving others. *Rom.* xiii. 8 & 10. *Gal.* v. 14. *Matt.* xxii. 39, 40. So that in reality, there is no passage in the New Testament, in which a sign of godliness is pointed out, in which holy practice is not chiefly intended. This clearly proves that holy practice is the chief evidence of real godliness. As, therefore, we profess to make the word of God our rule, we should undoubtedly try ourselves by those marks to which the scriptures direct us for that purpose? And surely those things which Christ and his Apostles chiefly insisted on, as signs of grace, Ministers ought chiefly to insist on with the same view. To insist much on those things on which the scriptures insist little; and to insist little upon those things upon which the scriptures insist much, is a most dangerous error. The

scriptures were made for man, and they are by Infinite Wisdom fitted for our use and benefit: we should, therefore, make them our guide in judging of religion and of ourselves.

Holy practice is not only more frequently mentioned and insisted on than other signs; but in many places it is represented as the chief evidence. If God was now to speak from heaven to resolve our doubts respecting marks of godliness, and should point out some particular sign, by which we might know with certainty, whether we were sincerely godly or not; should we not regard it as a matter beyond doubt, that the evidence mentioned was given as a special, distinguishing sign of true godliness,—a mark which, above all others, was to be decisive? Now this is precisely the case with the evidence of which I am speaking. God has very often expressed himself in the following manner concerning Christian practice: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, HE IT IS THAT LOVETH ME," *John*, xiv. 21. This declaration, as appears from the context, was made to comfort his disciples after his departure. I would observe, that not only the emphasis with which Christ expresses himself is remarkable, but also his repeatedly enforcing the subject, as he does in the context: "If ye love me, keep my commandments," ver. 15. "If a man love me, he will keep my words," ver. 23. In the next chapter he repeatedly makes similar declarations: "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples," ver. 8. "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you," ver. 14.—"HEREBY we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments," 1 *John* ii. 3. "Whoso keepeth his word, IN HIM VERILY is the love of God perfected: HEREBY know we

that we are in him," ver. 5. Let us love in deed and in truth: HEREBY* we know that we are of the truth," chap iii 18, 19. And how evidently is holy practice mentioned as the grand mark of distinction, between the children of God and the children of the devil, in the tenth verse of the same chapter: "In THIS the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." "He that doeth righteousness, is righteous—he that committeth sin is of the devil," ver. 7, 8. We have a similar emphatical declaration in 2 *John* 6. "THIS IS THE LOVE OF GOD, that we walk after his commandments;" that is, as we must understand the expression, This is the proper evidence of love. Again, in 1 *John*, v. 3. "THIS IS THE LOVE OF GOD, that we keep his commandments." So the Apostle James, speaking of the proper evidences of real piety, says, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, IS THIS, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep" ourselves "unspotted from the world," *James*, i 27. We have similar expressions used upon the same subject in the Old Testament. "He judged the cause of the poor and needy;—*was* not this to know me? saith the Lord," *Jer.* xxii 16. "Come, ye children, hearken unto me, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord.—Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile; depart from evil, and do good; seek peace and pursue it," *Psa* xxiv. 11, &c. See also *Job*, xxviii. 28. *Psa.* xv. 1, &c. xxiv. 3, 4. cxix. 1, 6. *Prov.* viii. 20.

On the other hand, the scriptures never use such emphatical expressions respecting any other signs of hypocrisy, as that of unholy practice:

* The translation of the word *hereby* would have been more literal, as well as more emphatical, had it been rendered *by this*.

" Be not deceived, God is not mocked ; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," *Gal.* vi. 7. " Be not deceived ; neither fornicators, —nor idolaters,—nor adulterers,—nor thieves,—nor drunkards, &c. shall inherit the kingdom of God," 1 *Cor.* vi. 9, 10. " He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him," 1 *John*, ii. 4. " If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's religion *is* vain," *James*, i. 26. A " highway shall be there—and it shall be called, The way of holiness ; the unclean shall not pass over it," *Isa.* xxxv. 8. " And there shall in no wise enter into" the celestial city " any thing that worketh abomination or maketh a lie," *Rev.* xxi. 27.

Argument V. Another circumstance which renders it evident, that holy practice is the best proof of our sincerity as professors of religion, not only to the world, but to our own consciences,—is, that this is the chief evidence which will hereafter be made use of before the judgment seat of God ; according to which the sentences then pronounced will be regulated, and the state of every professor of religion unalterably determined. At the last day there will be a manifest and conspicuous trial of professors, at which evidence will be produced.—But the final judgment of men, in order to their everlasting retribution, will not be a trial of the state of their hearts for the satisfaction of the Divine Mind ; but a declarative judgment, a manifestation of the justice of God to their own consciences, and to the world. Hence the day of judgment is called the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, *Rom.* ii. 5. The design of the future trial and judgment of men, will be especially the clear manifestation of the righteous judgment of God, to

the conscience of each individual, as is manifest from *Matt* xviii 31, &c xx. 8—15. xxii. 11—13. xxv. 19—30. 35, &c. *Luke* xix 15—23 And therefore, though God needs no medium through which to make the truth evident to himself, yet evidence will be made use of in his final judgment of men. This evidence will no doubt be such as shall be best adapted to the end proposed, that is, the manifestation of the righteous judgment of God, not only to the world in general, but also to every man's conscience in reference to himself The scriptures abundantly teach us, that the chief evidences of which the Judge will make use, and according to which the final state of every man will be determined, will be our works, or moral conduct in this world: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened;—and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works; and the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell," or the unseen world, "delivered up the dead which were in them; and every man was judged according to" *his* "works." *Rev.* xx. 12, 13. See also 2 *Cor.* v. 10 In that most particular description of the day of judgment in the 25th chapter of Matthew, the moral conduct of men is the only evidence mentioned by Christ, as that by which the sentence of each individual will be regulated. See likewise *Rom.* ii. 6—13. *Jer.* xvii 10. *Job* xxxiv. 11. *Prov.* xxiv. 12. *Jer.* xxxii. 19. *Rev.* xxii. 12. *Matt.* xvi. 27 *Rev* ii. 23. *Ezek.* xxxiii. 20. 1 *Pet.* i. 17. The Judge, at the last day, will not examine us as to the particulars of our experience, or require us to relate the circumstances of our conversion, but our works will be produced as decisive evidence: "For God will bring every work into judgment,—whether *it be*

good, or whether *it be* evil," *Eccl.* xii. 14. In the trial of professors at the last day, God will make use of the same kind of evidence in order to manifest each individual to himself, and to the world, as he now makes use of for the same purpose, in the temptations, or trials of his providence; that is, their conduct in cases wherein Christ and other things come into actual and immediate competition.

Hence we may undoubtedly infer, that our works, as explained above, are the most decisive criterion as to our real state; and in forming a judgment of ourselves now, we should certainly adopt that evidence which our supreme Judge will chiefly make use of, when we come to stand before him at the last day.

From what has been said, it is abundantly clear, that Christian practice is the most decisive evidence of the gracious sincerity of professors, both to themselves and to others. The saints may have other exercises of grace besides these, which are very satisfying to themselves; but still this is the chief and most decisive evidence. There may be several circumstances which render it probable that a certain tree is a fig-tree, but the most decisive evidence is that it actually bears figs. So it is possible that a man, at his conversion, may have good evidence that he is in a state of grace, before he has had the opportunity of gaining assurance by the evidence of which I am speaking.

Christian practice is that evidence which confirms every other indication of true godliness. There is not one grace of the Spirit of God, of the existence of which, in any professor of religion, Christian practice is not the most decisive evidence.

Practice is the most decisive proof of the saving knowledge of God. This appears from a passage

already quoted: "Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." It is in vain for us to profess that we know God, if in works we deny him, *Tit.* i. 16. And if we know God, but glorify him not as God, our knowledge will only lead to our condemnation, *Rom.* i. 21. The distinguishing mark of that knowledge which saves and makes happy, is, that it is practical: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them," *John* xiii. 17. "To depart from evil, *is* understanding," *Job* xxviii. 28.

Holy practice is the most decisive evidence of the reality of our repentance. When the Jews professed repentance, confessing their sins to John, while he was preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; he directed them to the best way of obtaining, and exhibiting proper evidence of the truth of their repentance, when he said to them, "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance," *Matt.* iii. 8. Agreeable to this was the practice of the Apostle Paul, See *Acts*, xxvi. 20. Pardon and mercy are often promised to him who, as an evidence of true repentance, forsakes his sins, *Prov.* xxviii. 13. *Isa.* lv. 7, and many other places.

Holy practice is the best evidence of saving faith. The Apostle James speaks of works, as justifying our profession of faith, or manifesting the sincerity of our profession, not only to the world, but to our own consciences, *James*, ii. 21—24. In the 20 and 26 verses, he speaks of the practical nature of faith, as constituting its very essence. Doubtless then practice is the best evidence of faith.

Practice is the most decisive proof of our having come to Christ, as our Saviour. Our coming to Christ savingly, is our coming to him, so as to forsake all for him, so far as circumstances may re-

quire. Christ promises us eternal life, on condition of our coming to him; but he requires such a coming as that to which he directed the young man, who came to inquire what he should do that he might have eternal life: Christ bid him "go and sell all that he had, and come and follow him." Had he really consented, the proper evidences of his having done so, would have been his actually doing as he was commanded. When Christ called Levi the publican, he was sitting at the receipt of custom. and occupied with his worldly gains; the compliance of his mind with the invitation was manifested by his actually leaving all and following the Saviour, *Luke* v. 27, 28. Christ and other things are set before us together, in order that we may practically cleave to the one, and forsake the other; and our practically cleaving to Christ, is our acceptance of him. Our cleaving to Christ in practice, is that act of the mind, which may with the greatest propriety be denominated the coming of the soul to Christ.

Practice is the most decisive evidence of our trusting in Christ for salvation. The word *trust*, according to the more ordinary use of it, conveys the idea of our being induced to make some venture in practice, or to do something on the credit of the sufficiency and faithfulness of some other person; and therefore the proper evidence of this exercise of the mind, is our actually making the venture required. Hence it is, that in complying with the difficulties of Christian practice, in a dependence on the sufficiency and faithfulness of Christ, we are said to trust in him for everlasting life. We depend on such promises as the following; "He that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it," *Matt.* x. 39. Abraham, the father of believers, trusted in Christ, and by faith forsook his

own country, in a reliance on the covenant of grace which God had established with him, *Heb.* xi. 8, 9. Thus also, "by faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," *Heb.* xi. 24, &c. By faith others exposed themselves to be sawn in sunder, and to be slain by the sword; endured the trial of cruel mockings, of scourges, of bonds and of imprisonments; they wandered about in sheep skins, and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented In this sense, the Apostle Paul by faith trusted in Christ: "For which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day," 2 *Tim.* i. 12 He who, on the credit of what he hears of a future world, forsakes all, at least so far as there is occasion, making every thing subservient to his everlasting interest, is the only person who can with propriety be said to venture on the report of the gospel; and this is the proper evidence of a real trust in Christ for salvation.

Practice is the proper evidence of a gracious love, both as that affection respects God and our fellow men. The texts of scripture in which this is clearly taught, have been so often mentioned in the preceding parts of this Treatise, that it is needless to repeat them.

Practice is the proper evidence of humility. That expression or manifestation of humility which God requires, and to which therefore we should pay particular attention, is *walking humbly*, *Micah* vi. 8.

Practice is the proper evidence of the fear of God: "The fear of the Lord, *is* to hate evil,"

Prov. viii. 13. "By the fear of the Lord, *men* depart from evil," chap xvi. 6. See also *Psa.* xxxiv. 11, &c. *Prov* iii. 7. *Job* i. 8.

Practice is the proper evidence of a gracious hope: "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure," 1 *John*, iii. 3. Patient continuance in well doing, through the difficulties and trials of the Christian course, is often mentioned as the proper expression and fruit of Christian hope: "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you, at the revelation of Jesus Christ, as obedient children, &c. 1 *Pet.* i. 13, 14. "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope," 1 *Thess.* i. 3. "Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments," *Psa.* cxix. 166. "That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments," *Psa.* lxxviii 7.

A cheerful performance of duty, is the proper evidence of a true holy joy: "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness," *Psa.* lxiv. 5. "The abundance of their joy,—abounded unto the riches of their liberality," 2 *Cor.* viii. 2.

Practice is the proper evidence of Christian fortitude. A good soldier is proved, not at home, but in the field of battle, 1 *Cor.* ix. 25, 26. 2 *Tim.* ii. 3—5.

As holy practice is the chief evidence of our being possessed of grace; so the degree in which our experience is productive of practice, shows the degree in which our experience is spiritual and divine. Whatever pretensions we may make to great discoveries, great love and joy, they are no further to be regarded, than as they actually in

fluence our practice. Allowance must indeed be made for natural temper; but still our progress in grace, is ascertained by the degree in which it is efficacious in practice. The effect of grace, is as great, and the alteration as remarkable, in a person of a bad natural temper, as in another. Although a person of such a temper, will not behave himself so well, with the same degree of grace, as another person would do; yet the change may be as great, because a person of a good natural temper, did not behave himself so ill before conversion.

Thus having endeavoured to prove that Christian practice must be the proper and most decisive evidence of saving grace; before I conclude this Treatise, I would say something in reply to two objections, which may perhaps be raised against what has been advanced upon this subject.

Objection I. It may perhaps be said, that what has been insisted on, is evidently contrary to the opinion prevailing among good people, that professors should judge of their state, chiefly by their feelings and experience.

I answer, This opinion is no doubt correct, and deserves to be received amongst good people; but it is a great mistake to suppose that what has been said, is at all contrary to that opinion. Evangelical, or holy practice, is spiritual practice, and not mere corporeal motion It is the exertion of a spirit, animating, commanding and directing the body to which it is united, and over which it has power given it by the Creator. And therefore the main thing in holy practice, is the disposition of the mind. The motions of the body are to be regarded as belonging to Christian practice, only as they are connected with the volitions of the soul. The exercises of grace, of which the believer is sen-

sible, constitute Christian experience; and this experience consists as much in those operations of grace upon the will, by which our actions are immediately directed, as in mere mental exercises. These exercises of grace, are not the less a part of Christian experience, because they are immediately connected with our actions. For instance, ardent love to God, is not the less a part of gracious experience, because it is that which immediately produces some self denying, or extraordinary action, tending to promote the honour and glory of God.

To represent Christian experience and practice, as properly and altogether distinct, is wrong. Indeed, all Christian experience is not necessarily connected with practice; but all Christian practice is in reality experience. Holy practice is one kind, or part of Christian experience; and both reason and scripture represent it as the chief, the most important, and the most distinguishing part of it. "He judgeth the cause of the poor and the needy: was not this to know me? saith the Lord," *Jer* xxii. 16. Our acquaintance with God, certainly belongs to experimental religion; but this is represented, as consisting chiefly in that experience which is included in holy practice. The love of God, and the fear of God, are a part of experimental religion; but the scriptures already quoted represent them as consisting chiefly in practice: "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments," 1 *John*, v 3. See also 2 *John*, 6. "Come, ye children, hearken unto me—I will teach you the fear of the Lord: Depart from evil and do good," *Psa.* xxxiv. 11, &c. It was such experience as this, in which Hezekiah took comfort, when he said, "Remember, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in

truth and with a perfect heart." The Psalmist chiefly insists upon such experience as this in the cxix. Psalm. The Apostle Paul insists upon this kind of experience, in many places in his epistles. See *Rom.* i. 9. 2 *Cor.* i. 12. iv. 13. v. 7—14. vi. 4—7. *Gal.* ii. 20. *Phil.* iii. 7, 8. *Col.* i. 29. 1. *Thess.* ii. 8—10. It was this kind of experience from which this blessed Apostle derived support and comfort, when he was about to suffer martyrdom: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith," 2 *Tim.* iv. 6, 7.

And not only does the most important and distinguishing part of Christian experience, consist in spiritual practice; but such is the nature of these exercises of grace, that nothing else is so properly called by the name of experimental religion. For that experience which, in these exercises of grace, proves effectual, at the time of trial, is the proper experiment as to the sincerity of our profession, and the power of our religious principles. As that is called experimental philosophy, which brings opinions to the test of fact; so that is properly called experimental religion, which brings religious affections to a similar test.

There is a kind of religious practice, which is not connected with experience, and which, in the sight of God, is esteemed as good for nothing. And there is what is called experience, which has no connexion with practice; and this is worse than nothing. Whenever we feel a disposition to treat God, as his infinite perfections and our dependence upon him demand, and at the same time are placed in circumstances of trial, and find this disposition effectual in the experiment, we are then the subjects of the most satisfactory experi-

ence. Religion consists much in holy affection; but those exercises of affection which are most characteristic of true religion, are practical exercises. Human friendship consists much in affection; but these strong exercises of affection, which actually induce us to make great exertions, or sacrifices for others, are the most, and indeed the only decisive proofs of true friendship.

There is nothing in this at all contrary to what is asserted by some sound divines, that is, that there are no sure proofs of grace, but the acts of grace. For those operative practical exercises of grace, may still be the most decisive proofs of the existence of grace. Many of these exercises of grace, following one another, under various trials, may also render the evidence still more decisive, as one act confirms another. The disciples, when they first saw Jesus Christ, after his resurrection, had good evidence that he was alive; but by conversing with him forty days, they had still more decisive proofs that he was risen indeed.

The witness, or seal of the Holy Spirit, of which we read, is no doubt the effect of that Spirit upon the human mind, in the implantation and exercises of grace there, and so consists in experience. Neither can it be doubted, but that this seal of the Spirit, is the most decisive evidence of our adoption, that we can possibly obtain. But in the manifest exercises of grace, already described, the Holy Spirit gives evidence, and sets to his seal in the most clear and satisfactory manner. It has been abundantly demonstrated by the experience of the Christian church, that in general Christ communicates to his people by the Holy Spirit, the most decisive and evident marks of their sonship, in those effectual exercises of grace under trials, which have been spoken of above. This has been

manifest in the full assurance, and indescribable joy of many of the martyrs. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy *are ye;* for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you," 1 *Pet.* iv. 14. "We—rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and—glory in tribulations also," *Rom.* v. 2, 3. This is agreeable to what the Apostle Paul often declares, in reference to what he experienced in his various trials. When the Apostle Peter, in the passage prefixed to this Treatise, speaks of the joy unspeakable and full of glory, which the Christians to whom he wrote experienced, he has respect to what they felt under persecution, as appears from the context. It is evident from other parts of the chapter, that when the Apostle Paul speaks of the witness of the Spirit, in *Rom* viii. 15—17, he has an immediate respect to what the Christians experienced in their exercises of love to God, while suffering persecution. He is, in the preceding verses, encouraging the Roman converts under their sufferings with the consideration, that, though their bodies should die, because of sin, they should be raised to life again. But this is more especially evident from the verse immediately following: "For I reckon, that the sufferings of the present time *are* not worthy to be *compared with* the glory which shall be revealed in us." Indeed, the Apostle has no doubt a reference to their persecutions in all that he says, to the end of the chapter. In like manner, when he speaks of the earnest of the Spirit, which God had given to him, as in 2 *Cor.* v. 5, the context shows that he has respect to what was communicated to him in his great trials and afflictions. And in the promise of the white stone, and the new name, *Rev.* ii. 17, it is evident that Christ has a special reference to a benefit which

Christians should obtain, by overcoming in the day of trial and of persecution. The same circumstance also appears from many passages in the address to the seven churches of Asia.

Objection II. Some professors may be disposed to object against what has been said of Christian practice, as the chief evidence of grace, that this is a legal doctrine; and that by making practice of such great importance in religion, we magnify works, and lead men to depend on their own righteousness, to the disparagement of the glory of free grace, and in opposition to the doctrine "of justification by faith alone."

But this objection is altogether without foundation. In what respects is it inconsistent with the freeness of the grace of God, that holy practice should be a sign of our interest in that grace? It is our works considered as the price of the divine favour, and not their being merely the sign of it, that is inconsistent with the freeness of that favour. A beggar, viewing the money he has received as a token of the kindness of him who gave it, may still regard the gift as being perfectly free and undeserved. It is his having received money as the reward of something done, which is inconsistent with the free kindness of the giver. The true notion of the freeness of the grace of God to sinners, is not that no holy and amiable qualifications or actions are fruits, and therefore signs of our interest in that grace; but that it is not any qualification, or action of ours which recommends us to the divine favour. Gracious kindness is shown to the unworthy; goodness flows from the fountain of goodness, while there is no amiableness in the object upon which it rests. This is the true notion of justification without works. It is not the worthiness of our actions, or any thing

in us, which, in any measure, is accepted as an atonement for the guilt of sin, or as a recommendation to the divine favour. We are justified *solely* through the righteousness of Christ. When works are opposed to faith, with regard to our justification, and it is said that we are justified by faith, and not by works, it is meant that neither our works, nor any dispositions we possess, at all recommend us to an interest in Christ, and the blessings of his salvation; but that these blessings are communicated only through faith, or by our souls receiving Christ as our Saviour. But that no worthiness in us recommends us to God, is no argument that nothing in us is a sign of interest in his favour.

If the doctrines of free grace, and of justification by faith alone, are inconsistent with the importance of holy practice, as a sign of grace; then they are inconsistent with the importance of any thing in us, regarded as a sign of grace; any holiness, or any experience; for it is as much contrary to the doctrines of free grace, and of justification by faith alone, that either of these should be the righteousness by which we are justified, as that holy practice should. To treat holy obedience with indifference because we are not justified by works, is the same thing in effect as treating all religion with indifference, even angelical holiness, and gracious experience; for all these are included, when the scriptures say, we are not justified by works. By works in this case, is meant every thing that we experience as well as every thing that we do; every exercise of the mind, as well as every exertion of the body. If we were justified by any of these, we should, in a scripture sense, be justified by works; and therefore, if it is not legal, nor contrary to the doctrine

of justification without works, to insist on any of these as indicative of our interest in Christ, neither is it, with the same view, to insist on the importance of holy practice. It would be legal to suppose that holy practice gives us a title to the blessings of salvation; but it is not legal to suppose, that holy practice is the proper and most decisive evidence of our sincerity. The Apostle James did not think it legal to say, that Abraham was justified by works in this sense. The Spirit that indited the Scriptures, did not think that the absolute necessity of a holy practice, in this respect, was inconsistent with the freeness of grace; for in general the sacred writings teach them in union with each other. In *Rev.* xxi. 6, 7. it is said "I will give unto him that is athirst, of the fountain of the water of life freely;" and then it is immediately added, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things;" as though behaving well in the Christian race and warfare, was the condition of the promise. In the next chapter, it is said, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city;" and then in the next verse, the writer proceeds to state, that without are liars, whoremongers, murderers, &c. and yet in the two verses immediately following, an invitation is giving to all to come, and take of the water of life freely. Similar is the invitation to sinners to accept of free grace, in *Isa.* lv. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Even in the continuation of this passage, the sinner's forsaking his wicked practice, is mentioned as necessary to his obtaining mercy; "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man

his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon," ver 7. See also *Isa.* i. 16, &c. Hence it is evident that the freeness of grace, and the necessity of a holy practice, which are often joined together in scripture, are not inconsistent with each other. Nor does it at all diminish the importance of faith, that its exercises and effects in practice, are the chief indications of our possessing it; any more than it lessens the importance of animal life, that motion and action are the chief signs of its existence.

Hence it also appears, that in what has been said of the importance of holy practice, as the most decisive mark of sincerity, there is nothing legal; nothing derogatory to the freedom and sovereignty of gospel grace; nothing in the least clashing with the gospel doctrine of justification by faith alone, without the works of the law; nothing in the least tending to lessen the glory of the Mediator, and our dependence on his righteousness; nothing infringing on the special prerogatives of faith, in the affair of salvation; nothing in any way detracting from the glory of God, and of his mercy; nothing tending to exalt man, or to lessen his dependence and obligations. So that if any believers are opposed to such an importance of holy practice as that insisted on above, it must arise from an inconsiderate aversion to the word *works;* when they might with equal reason dislike the words holiness, grace, religion, experience, and even faith itself; for to make a righteousness of our faith, experience, &c. is as legal, and as inconsistent with the new covenant, as to make a righteousness of holy practice.

It is highly injurious to religion to make light of those things upon which the scriptures insist most;

for instance, to neglect the exercises, and effectual operations of grace in practice, and to insist almost wholly on discoveries, and the mere exercises of the mind. It is in vain to look for any better signs than those which the scriptures have most expressly mentioned as marks of godliness. Those persons who profess, by their extraordinary experience, and insight into the nature of things, to point out more distinguishing criterions for the detection of hypocrisy, than those which the scriptures give us, are but ingenious to the confusion of their own minds, and the minds of others; their penetration and sagacity are, in the sight of God, but refined foolishness, and sagacious delusion. To such the words of Agur are applicable; "Every word of God *is* pure;——add not thou unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar," *Prov.* xxx. 5, 6. Our discernment and wisdom with regard to the hearts of men, are not much to be trusted. We see but a little way into the state of the human mind. The means are so many by which our passions may be moved, without any supernatural influence; the springs of our affections are so various, and so secret; so many things may, at the same time, and in conjunction, influence our affections;—for instance, the imagination, natural temper, education, the common influences of the Holy Spirit, a surprising concourse of affecting circumstances, an extraordinary coincidence in the course of our thoughts, together with the subtle management of invisible, malicious spirits;—that no philosophy, or experience will ever be sufficient to guide us safely, without our closely following the directions which God has given us in his holy word. Our heavenly Father has no doubt his reasons for insisting on some

things as marks by which we should try ourselves, rather than by others. Perhaps he knows that those criterions are attended by less perplexity, and that we are less liable to be deceived by them, than by others. He best knows our nature, and the nature of his own operations; he is best acquainted with the means of securing our safety; he knows what allowance to make for different states of his church, and different tempers of particular persons; and therefore it is our wisdom not to take his work out of his hands, but to follow his prescriptions, and judge of ourselves as he directs us. If we do otherwise, no wonder if we are bewildered, confounded and fatally deluded. But if we are in the habit of looking chiefly at those things as marks of piety, which Christ, and his Apostles, and the Prophets most earnestly insisted on, so that in judging of ourselves, and of others, we chiefly regard the practical exercises and effects of grace, our conduct will be attended by the happiest consequences; it will be the means of delivering us from innumerable perplexities, arising from the various schemes which have been invented for the purpose of ascertaining the real state of professors; it will above all things lead to the conviction of deluded hypocrites; it will tend to prevent professors from neglecting strictness of life, and to promote their circumspection and earnestness in the Christian walk. Were we guided uniformly by scripture rules in judging of professors of religion, it would become usual for men to exhibit their piety more by an amiable behaviour, than by frequently and obtrusively relating their experience; we should get into the way of appearing lively in religion, more by activity in the service of God, and of our generation, than by

the fluency of our tongues; professors would converse together of their experience in a manner better becoming Christian humility, and more to each other's profit; many occasions of spiritual pride would be prevented; the main stumbling blocks in the way of experimental piety would be removed; so that the relation of our experience, instead of hardening those who hear us, and promoting infidelity and atheism, would tend to convince men that there is a reality in religion, and to awaken them to a sense of its great importance. Thus our light, as professors, would so shine before men, that others seeing our good works, would glorify our Father who is in heaven.

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